THE ENLIGHTENING SUPERNATURAL: GHOST STORIES IN LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY GERMANY

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ABSTRACT

Rory E. Bradley: The Enlightening Supernatural: Ghost Stories in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany
(Under the direction of Eric S. Downing)

This dissertation explores the place of ghosts in late eighteenth-century German texts, where they appear with surprising frequency despite widespread disbelief in their ontological reality. These ghosts could simply be lingering remnants of superstition in an age where they no longer belong, but my project argues that they play a central role in the Enlightenment and its ideal of progress. The key texts analyzed in this context include three versions of the story of the *Weiße Frau*, as well as works by Immanuel Kant, Karl Philipp Moritz, Friedrich Schiller, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. In various ways, these texts demonstrate how the presentation of a ghost creates new possibilities in philosophy and aesthetics, as well as opportunities for critique. For some, the ghostly encounter produces an "Enlightening" suspense, disrupting the normal conditions of one's understanding and creating a demand for resolution that propels one towards the future. Some recognized a dangerous manipulative potential in such suspense, and they used ghost stories to critique Enlightenment thought or imagine alternative aesthetic models. In all of these works, the ghost does not function simply as a relic of the past that needs to be left behind; it features prominently as a means of considering the present and imagining the future.

The relationship between the Enlightenment and superstitious beliefs has either been oversimplified as a basic opposition, or complicated by the recognition that the commitment to reason works as a new form of superstition. Prior scholarship has recognized the German ghost story as a primarily nineteenth-century phenomenon. This dissertation uncovers the roots of the

German ghost story in unlikely texts from the eighteenth century and suggests that the relationship between ghostly apparitions and the Enlightenment was more complementary than oppositional. Ghosts do not only represent the persistence of the past, they also disrupt the normal conditions of the present in a way that enables progress towards new possibilities in aesthetics and thought.

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INTRODUCTION

"Je n'y crois pas aux fantômes, mais j'en ai peur."
I do not believe in ghosts, but I am afraid of them.
--Madame du Deffand[1]

PHILALETH: Also; was verstehen Sie unter einem Gespenst?

PHOBERON: (nachdenkend) Ein Gespenst ist—ist—sonderbar genug! Ich sahe eins, und weiβ doch nicht was es ist.
--Friedrich Wilhelm Klaeden, *Über die Gespensterfurcht*[2]

In 1789, when Christoph Martin Wieland penned an essay addressing the debate over the question "Was ist Aufklärung,"[3] he described the Enlightenment as an ongoing process of shining light into every dark corner of the world, illuminating every shadowy place. The darkness to be banished is comprised of the "Masse der Vorurtheile und Wahnbegriffe" [4] that still preoccupy far too many people; the light that will banish it is characterized by the "Scham vor Unwissenheit und Unvernunft, die Begierde nach nützlichen und edelen Kenntnissen, und

[1] The earliest textual record of this witticism comes from: Charles G. Harper, *Haunted Houses: Tales of the Supernatural With Some Account of Hereditary Causes and Family Legends,* 3rd ed. (1907; rpt. London: Cecil Palmer, 1927), p. v. Harper records the exchange slightly differently: "'Do you believe in ghosts?' asked a gentleman of Madame du Deffand. 'No,' replied the witty lady, 'but I am afraid of them.'" As others have quoted it, it expresses the same sentiment in various forms. The version used for this epitaph is my translation of Richard Alewyn's German version of it in: "Die Lust an der Angst," in: *Probleme und Gestalten: Essays* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1974): 316.

[2] Friedrich Wilhelm Klaeden, *Über die Gespensterfurcht: Gespräche und Briefe* (Halle: 1784): 6.

[3] Christoph Martin Wieland, "Ein paar Goldkörner aus – Maculatur oder sechs Antworten auf sechs Fragen," in: *Teutschen Merkur* (April 1789): 94-105.

[4] Ibid. 104.

besonders […] der Respekt vor der menschlichen Natur und ihren Rechten unter allen Ständen."[5] Wieland's definition intentionally lacks subtlety, because he does not think the Enlightenment is difficult to define. Everybody already knows what it is, he reasons, so long as they have learned to recognize the difference between light and dark. The Enlightenment occurs when the light gets bigger and the dark gets smaller; if one knows which one is which, then answering the question "Was ist Aufklärung?" is a very simple task.

Ghosts and ghost stories clearly belong to the darkness of superstition and "Unvernunft," but the eighteenth century—the century of the Enlightenment—was enormously preoccupied with them. Philosophical texts debated the belief in ghosts, journals and newspapers were full of reports of ghostly sightings, and poems, plays and novels featuring ghosts were some of the century's most popular. This dissertation considers works by many of the canonical figures of eighteenth-century German letters, including Immanuel Kant, Karl Philipp Moritz, Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Although the works considered predate the era of German Romanticism, which one associates far more readily with the supernatural, all of them actively consider ghosts, ghost stories or the belief in ghosts. The German-speaking region was also not the only place where ghosts were a popular topic—England, France and the American colonies showed just as much interest in apparitions and specters throughout the so-called Age of Enlightenment. If the Enlightenment is identified with the spread of light, it must also be said that the scope of the darkness in the eighteenth century was very large indeed.

Understood to be apparitions of people who have died—people who should have left the earth—ghosts are defined by the quality of being always out-of-place. The persistent interest in them throughout the Enlightenment, where they certainly do not belong, may nevertheless seem

[5] Wieland (1789) 104.

unusual. Scholars reflecting on this paradox have recognized the fascination with ghosts as a reactionary turn away from the propriety of reason or as the persistence of the irrational within the rational. Ghosts lie just outside the purview of the Enlightenment and have thus been used to identify its boundaries and limitations. This project argues instead that ghosts play a central role in the Enlightenment. Their presence as something out-of-place—a problem to be solved, a challenge to be met with courage, a past to be reckoned with, a suspenseful occurrence demanding resolution—creates the possibility of an as-yet-unimagined future, imbuing the present with a potentiality that propels it forward.

Considering the existence of ghosts in philosophical and literary texts establishes the conditions for expanded knowledge, new aesthetic possibilities, and new critiques of human behavior and society. As such, ghosts in the Enlightenment should not be dismissed as the relics of a prior age, lingering where they do not belong and awaiting the advent of the light that will banish the darkness. This one-sided understanding portrays them as the fundamental opponents of intellectual progress. Arguing that ghosts actually play a central role in the Enlightenment project, this dissertation shifts emphasis away from the simple opposition between past and present. It examines how the Enlightenment sought to reckon with the experience of suspense precipitated by a spectral encounter and to use that experience to move towards resolution and thereby to progress towards new possibilities and reflections. In this way, the late eighteenth century sought to "live with" its ghosts, to use Jacques Derrida's suggestive but cryptic phrase.[6]

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[6] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994): xviii. The phrase comes up in the text's "exordium" to its readers and relates to its of asking readers to continue to look forward to new, unimagined possibilities at a time when the fall of the Soviet Union had others scholars declaring the "end of history." Colin Davis beautifully summarizes Derrida's sentiments as follow: "[he] calls on us to attend to ghosts, to unlearn what we thought we knew for certain in order to learn what we still cannot formulate or imagine." This project is indebted

The encounter with the ghost does not merely become a battle with the past that one can either win or lose. Instead, the ghost becomes central to establishing the conditions for intellectual progress, and thereby central to the Enlightenment project itself.

What are ghosts?

The first question raised by a project on ghosts is also the most difficult: what is a ghost exactly? Almost immediately, I find myself in a situation similar to what Shoshanna Felman observed in her seminal article on Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*. Writing critically about ghost stories tends to produce a "ghost effect," which is to say the questions posed in the primary text come back to haunt the secondary literature; critics find themselves repeating the same inquiries staged in the text they are considering.[7] In posing the question, "what is a ghost?" my dissertation echoes many eighteenth-century texts. In his work *Träume eines Geistersehers erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (1766), Immanuel Kant ironically observes that though he has heard and used the word "Geist" many times himself, he has never before actually stopped to ask himself what it means. In Friedrich Wilhelm Klaeden's *Kurze Gespräche über Gespenster*, a credulous character complains to his friend that he has seen a ghost. When his friend asks him to explain himself and exactly what he means by this, he remarks in

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to this recognition of the important role that ghosts can play in establishing the conditions for the future. Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007): 19.

[7] See Shoshanna Felman, "Turning the Screw of Interpretation," in *Yale French Studies* No. 55/56 (1977): 94-207.

astonishment, "I have seen one, but I don't know what it is…"[8] Conversations about ghosts often begin with similar realizations that the term, "ghost," does not have a stable meaning.

This is further complicated by a translation issue: when this dissertation refers to "ghosts," is it referring to the word "Geist" or to the word "Gespenst"? Kant uses "Geist" and "Geister," whereas Klaeden uses "Gespenst" and "Gespenster." Although the word *Geist* has meanings that distinguish it clearly from the meaning of *Gespenst*, the two can nevertheless be synonymous in certain contexts, and so this dissertation analyzes texts that use both words. According to Grimm's Wörterbuch,[9] "Gespenst" is an intensification of the root word "Spanst" or "Spenst," which has meanings related to tempting, goading, stimulating, and suggesting. Gespenster are often paired with Teufel and other beings who are capable of misleading and misdirecting their victims. "Geist," which Grimm traces backs to multiple roots, including the word for guest ("gast") and also the word for breath or wind, takes on a much wider variety of meanings, including mind and spirit (heiliger Geist = Holy Spirit). It also, however, has one subset of meaning and usage that make it synonymous with "Gespenst," and it is this sense that the word is used in this dissertation.[10] We make a comparable distinction in English when we talk of "a [specific] spirit" or "spirits," as opposed to talking about "spirit" in a more general sense. "A spirit" can be a synonym for "a ghost" in English, even though one can also talk about "spirit" without ghostly connotations or overtones. The difference has much to do with the effect

[8] Klaeden 6.

[9] The *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm* can be accessed online at woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB. Here, I refer to the entries for "GESPENST" and "GEIST"

[10] The first section of the entry for "GEIST" begins with a discussion of its "Form und Verwandtschaft," which indicates close connections with the English words "ghost" and "ghostly" (*geistlich*). The later section on the word's many meanings place more emphasis on its association with wind and breath, and also with religious connotations

of the spirit on its beholder—the appearance of "a spirit," like the appearance of a ghost, is often frightful, whereas a discussion of general "spirit" has a reverential, awe-inspiring, or even religious quality, without producing the same experience of fear.[11]

Examining the history of recorded encounters with ghostly apparitions can point the way towards a functional definition of the term. Pliny the Younger writes about the appearance of a ghost in one his letters, describing it as the spectral appearance of a person who had passed away, but whose bones had not been properly buried.[12] By assessing Pliny's account, we can identify several key characteristics that define a ghost. First, the ghost he describes can be distinguished from a fairy, an elemental or any other supernatural being, in that it is the spirit of a human. It is, in that sense, a supernatural manifestation of a non-supernatural being. Secondly, the ghost's presence in the world is described as spectral: it appears to occupy space without filling it. According to what we otherwise know about matter and the natural world, this makes the ghost's existence essentially paradoxical; if something appears to take up space, then we assume that it fills that space to the exclusion of other things. Through analysis of Pliny's story, we can identify a third characteristic that does not relate to the appearance of the ghost, but rather to its essential nature: a ghost appears because something has been handled improperly. The incongruous, paradoxical nature of the ghost's physical appearance reflects an action or event that has occurred, but should not have. A ghost appears as an impossible, improper thing in the present to echo the disruption caused by this past misdeed. In the case of the ghost that Pliny

[11] In their further discussion about the meaning of the word "Gespenst," the characters of Kladen's *Kurze Gespräche* ultimately settle on the idea that it is the "Würkung eines Geistes" (8). This definition, however, proves not to be specific enough, because if the effect is produced by God, then it does not count as a "Gespenst"—it must be the effect produced by a mortal spirit upon the beholder (8-9).

[12] See Pliny, *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, translated by Betty Radice (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963).

encountered, the body and bones of the person had not been buried properly, which was particularly important and culturally significant at that time. Once the bones were given a proper burial, the ghost ceased to appear, demonstrating that it had only appeared because the prior misconduct had gone unresolved.

Throughout history, the understanding of ghosts has shifted, altering the way in which people have thought about these defining characteristics; we can nevertheless observe a continuity in that understanding. Specifically, the unresolved, suspended nature of the ghost's existence has persisted throughout the centuries, though the particular conditions of that suspense shifted as religious and philosophical worldviews changed. [13] Whereas the ghost in Pliny's account returned because of an improper burial, ghosts in a Catholic culture were the spirits of those who remained in Purgatory; they, too, had not yet found their final resting places, and could thus return to the earth and appear to the living.[14] Eventually, Heinrich Jung-Stilling and others, working on the basis of a modified Catholic worldview in the nineteenth century, developed spiritualist movements suggesting that it was the task of the living to assist the dead in

[13] For example, Keith Thomas talks about ghosts in early Modern Europe returning "to confess some unrequited offence"; Lacan recognized "the return of the dead [as] the sign of a disturbance in the symbolic rite […] the dead return as collectors of some unpaid symbolic debt"; and Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok expanded psychoanalytical understandings of ghosts by suggesting that they resulted from secret misdeeds committed by family members from earlier generations. Cf. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971); Slavoj Zizek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991); Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, translated by Nicholas Rand (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1986).

[14] Two useful historical accounts of how the belief in ghosts shifted around the time of the Reformation include P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Ghosts: A History of Phantoms, Ghouls & Other Spiritis of the Dead*, (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2006) and Shane McCorristine, *Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2010).

completing their unresolved business on the earth.[15] Those spiritualist movements have continued, in the form of theosophy and other similar movements, into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Though often marginalized, their presence in human culture has continued to influence and inflect art and culture alongside the discourse of the "psychologized supernatural" discussed below.

Following the Reformation and the abolishing of Purgatory from Protestant theology in the 16th century, a growing Protestant culture lacked the specific religious conditions that allowed for the appearance of ghosts in the Catholic imagination. Nevertheless, the ghost's unresolved, suspended existence found a new form. Theoretically, the belief in ghosts should have disappeared in Protestant culture, but this was largely not the case. Instead, ghosts became a hotly debated topic for several centuries (16th-18th), with people arguing on both sides of a scientific, philosophical and cultural divide. During this period of time, the belief in ghosts took on the same unresolved characteristic that defined the ghost's existence. By abolishing the doctrine of Purgatory, Protestant culture witnessed the death of the conditions that allowed for the existence of unresolved spirits on earth; but the belief in those spirits persisted, living like a ghost within Protestant culture despite the lack of a justification for it. The belief in ghosts haunted Protestant culture like something that had not received a proper burial, and those who argued against that belief during this period seemed often to be seeking ways of finally putting those old and outdated beliefs to rest.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the persistent belief in ghosts was partially resolved by a psychologization of the supernatural, though this also allowed the

[15] Jung-Stilling's most significant contribution to the development of these spiritualist movements was his 1808 book *Theorie der Geisterkunde in einer Natur- Vernunft- und Bibelmäßigen Beantwortung auf der Frage: Was von Ahnungen, Gesichten und Geistererscheinungen geglaubt und nicht geglaubt werden müße* (Nuremberg: 1808).

unresolved quality of the ghost's existence to carry on in a new form.[16] Instead of thinking of ghostly apparitions as something that existed external to the self, people came to think of them as delusions and flights of fancy caused by disturbances in an individual's internal state. Those disturbances, projected outwards, would manifest as apparitions that haunted the disturbed individual; they were not actually spirits of people returning from the grave. Though this fundamentally shifted the way in which people thought about the reality of ghosts, it did not deviate from the idea that a ghost appeared due to a prior misdeed or wrongdoing. Now those misdeeds and wrongdoings were understood as mars on an individual's psychic state, causing the appearance or effect of ghostly apparitions even though those apparitions were not "real" anywhere outside of the person's mind. This psychologization of the supernatural found its clearest expression in Freud's psychoanalysis, though it was anticipated by thinkers in the 18th century and would be further developed by thinkers in the 20th and 21st century as well.

Pliny the Younger's account of a haunting allowed for the identification of three defining characteristics of a ghost: it is the spectral manifestation of a person who has died—the supernatural persistence of a naturally-occurring being; it paradoxically seems to fill space without actually occupying it; it returns to earth as the result of a prior misdeed or wrongdoing. Of these three, the first two are ultimately less reliable or consistent. For example, ghosts have also been understood as angels or demons pretending to be the spirit of someone who has died, rather than actually being a specter of that person himself; in addition, though ghostly apparitions

[16] For an excellent account of the "psychologization" of the supernatural, cf. Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (New York: Oxford UP, 1995).

tend to appear visually, some ghosts only manifest as noises or feelings.[17] The third characteristic is constant and also the most important. The ghosts marks the persistence in the present of an unresolved past. As mentioned above, the 16th-18th centuries are a particularly interesting moment for this, as the conditions of an emergent Protestantism and the intellectual developments of the Enlightenment made the belief in ghosts into a ghost of itself—an outdated worldview persisting in an age where it no longer had a place. Eighteenth-century thinkers reflecting on the belief in ghosts often had to repeat the same kinds of inquiries that would once have been directed at the ghosts themselves; a belief in ghosts persisted because some past superstition or prejudice had not been resolved, just as ghosts returned to haunt the present because of unresolved issues. The "ghost effect," as Shoshanna Felman describes it, was in full effect during the Enlightenment.

What is the ghost in the Enlightenment?

What is the Enlightenment? It is irresponsible nowadays even to pose this question, since the assumption that one could pose it of a singular "Enlightenment" has been roundly rejected by scholars who have sought to detail a far richer and more nuanced understanding of the period.[18] The caricature of a singular and monolithic Age of Reason was fabricated largely by historians and commentators of the nineteenth century as they looked back on the thinkers and events of the

[17] In Chapter Five of this dissertation, I discuss two ghost stories from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*, both of which contain ghosts that are only heard, but not seen. The famous ghost from Heinrich von Kleist's "Das Bettelweib von Locarno" is also a purely auditory ghost, and is never seen.

[18] Cf. especially Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (NewYork: Oxford UP, 2006); *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1752* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001); *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution and Human Rights 1750-1790* (New York: Oxford UP, 2011).

eighteenth.[19] If we take the "Enlightenment" primarily as a marker of time, then it might be said to stretch from the late seventeenth / early eighteenth century to the French Revolution at the end of eighteenth century.[20] This temporal periodization can also prove problematic, as different strains of various Enlightenments developed at different times and in different places, sometimes drawing on the work of thinkers who predated the "Enlightenment" proper. In terms of its beliefs and values—recent scholarship has shown that there were at least as many "Enlightenments" as there were thinkers of the Enlightenment.[21] Those thinkers ascribed variously to empiricism and to rationalism, held political views both conservative and revolutionary, proclaimed the virtues of religion and of secularism, and championed the values both of science and of art. The Enlightenment (whatever it might mean) also arrived at different places at different times—earlier in England and in France, later in Germany—and it sometimes saw itself furthering the projects of the great minds who had come before while other times seeking to reject earlier thinkers in favor of newly emergent ideas.

Most of these permutations of the "Enlightenment" enrich and complicate our understanding without actually discarding key commitments that belong to an Enlightenment project. Specifically, Western Europe in the eighteenth century was firmly dedicated to the idea

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[19] Cf. "Aufklärung" in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* Vol 1, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1975).

[20] Cf. Giorgio Tonelli, "The 'Weakness' of Reason in the Age of Enlightenment," in *Diderot Studies* (14:1 1971): 217-244.

[21] At the same time, there are scholars who write in defense of the "Enlightenment" as a singular project with a set of ideals and an intellectual ethos that still holds values in the present. Though this dissertation does not offer a similar defense, several of these studies proved helpful, insofar as they, too, sought to define the Enlightenment in a unified but flexible manner. Cf. Arthur Strum "What Enlightenment Is," in *New German Critique* No. 79 (Winter, 2000): 106-136; Tzvetan Todorov, *In Defense of the Enlightenment* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009).

of intellectual progress and the perfectability of humankind.[22] Scholars have been quite right to point out that there was no agreement on a singular vision for how this progress would be achieved, nor even what it might look like. The commitment to progress, however, was dominant enough that one can fairly speak of an eighteenth-century commitment to humanity's "Enlightenment," which is to say, its progress towards a "better" future. Though the path to achieving that Enlightenment is unclear, the term reason could be given to the thinking process that enabled intellectual progress; it describes a ratio between empirical consideration and rational thought.[23] For different thinkers, the importance of empiricism and rationalism varied, and as such, reason might mean something different to each; it represented a different ratio between those two key concepts. The destination (Enlightenment) and the means to get there (Reason) might therefore vary greatly without actually compromising our ability to characterize the eighteenth century as the Age of Enlightenment and the Age of Reason. In essence, this statement describes the eighteenth century as an age in which humankind was dedicated to the idea of intellectual progress and human perfectability achieved through some balance of empirical consideration and rational thought. This definition retains a commonly-held

[22] Ernst Cassirer is very helpful here, as he both acknowledges the underlying commitments of the period – progress and reason – seeking to define them in a way that honors both their unity and elasticity. Cf. *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1932).

[23] R. H. Popkin has identified skepticism as an important trend in Enlightenment philosophy—one that questions the reason's ability to offer knowledge with any demonstrative certainty. Though this skeptical position would seem to challenge the notion that humanity can actually progress by way of reason, I would argue that it remains invested in an ideal of progress—it seeks to disabuse humanity of false notions (of rationalism, as well as superstition) and to offer an improved and more accurate understanding of the human mind, even if that understanding is less optimistic about the possibility of gaining verifiable knowledge. Cf. Richard H. Popkin, "Scepticism in the Enlightenment," in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* XXVI, 1963.

understanding of what that period of time meant while still allowing room for the many ways in which those terms were utilized and interpreted.

This project focuses on the unifying characteristics of the various "Enlightenments" in order to successfully consider the relationship of the Enlightenment to ghosts and ghost stories. As mentioned above, the abolishment of Purgatory meant that by the sixteenth century, ghosts no longer had a justified place in a Protestant belief system. Throughout the seventeenth century, European society grew increasingly hostile towards all forms of superstition, including the belief in ghosts. That belief in ghosts became like a ghost itself—it was the persistent manifestation of a previous age that needed to be dispensed with properly. Its continued presence in human society was evidence that humankind had not yet become fully enlightened. Through its commitment to the present and the future—taken up in various forms and with many different intellectual commitments—the Enlightenment project was established as the firm opponent of all forms of superstition, which became clearly identified with the past.

In their seminal work, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Horkheimer and Adorno offered one of the clearest challenges to this simplistic vision of the opposition between the Enlightenment and superstition, which is referred to as "myth" in their critique.[24] The Enlightenment's demystification of the world relies on a re-enchantment of it under new auspices: it requires faith in the myth and authority of Reason itself, except that this new enchantment is more dangerous because it pretends not to be a myth. The logic of this argument inflects much of the scholarship that touches in one form or another on the relationship between the Enlightenment and superstition. Another argument, for example, claims that the psychologization of the supernatural, which was part of how the Enlightenment sought to dispense with superstitious

[24] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1944).

beliefs, inscribed irrationalism into the very fabric of the human psyche, complicating the ideal of individual human perfectability.[25] Superstition is not properly buried, but merely repressed, destined always to return and to disrupt the progress of the individual's enlightenment. The common narrative in these insightful and influential lines of scholarship is that the Enlightenment (the present) fought superstition (the past) sometime in the 18th century, and it ultimately lost, because looking back on it from the 20th century (the future), we can see that superstition ended up winning, as manifested in the horrors of Fascism and its myths, and in psychoanalysis's disturbing revelations about the human subconscious.

The fight against superstition in the Enlightenment occurred in conjunction with a set of transitions in how humanity related to and understood the presence of magic in the world. Simon During has described this transition as a shift from the popular magic of the medieval and Renaissance period to secular magic—that is, magic that was self-consciously illusory.[26] At a time when magic was considered "real," human beings used it to explain things that otherwise lacked explanation. Later, when there were fewer and fewer things in the world that lacked non-magical explanations, people instead began to focus on the "technically produced magic of conjuring shows and special effects."[27] According to During, this transition took place largely in the eighteenth century, during the Enlightenment period. Stefan Andriopoulos's recent scholarly work has similarly demonstrated that the appearance of ghosts in the theater and fiction of the late Enlightenment was connected with the emergence of visual technologies, such as the

[25] Cf. Castle 161.

[26] Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2002).

[27] Ibid, 27.

improved magic lantern—these stories and theatrical effects were "real" only as illusions, and were not meant to be accounts or presentations of true supernatural forces. [28]

The technical wonders of these self-consciously illusory magic shows also took on the intellectual and cultural value once ascribed to the natural marvel in the medieval and early modern period. A natural marvel was an anomaly of the natural world (a strange fossil or unusual specimen of an animal or insect, for example) that could be collected; it was considered valuable precisely because it was natural, not supernatural. As an unbelievable or inexplicable natural object, the marvel actually expanded one's understanding of the world by demonstrating something new that could occur within the bounds of nature. According to During, the perceived intellectual and cultural value of such natural marvels had waned by the middle of the eighteenth century, and the technical innovations of science, including those that could produce supernatural-like effects, took their place.[29]

The transition to self-consciously illusory or fictional magic roughly coincides with the rises of self-consciously fictional tales of the supernatural. During makes use of Tzvetan Todorov's terms,[30] arguing that fantastic and uncanny literature emerges in conjunction with secular magic based in technical innovation and with the declining cultural value of intellectual marvels. The history of ghost stories and the discourse on ghosts in the eighteenth century below

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[28] Cf. Stefan Andriopoulos, *Ghostly Apparitions: German Idealism, the Gothic Novel and Optical Media* (New York: Zone Books, 2013).

[29] During 29-30.

[30] Todorov, Tzvetan,*The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, translated by Richard Howard (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1973). Other important theoretical contributions to the "fantastic" include Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London, Methuen, 1981).

roughly supports During's claim, as the trajectory throughout the eighteenth century moves towards the popular novels and other forms of self-conscious fiction in the 1780's and '90's. These novels are indeed self-consciously fictional in a new way, evidenced in part by the strongly negative response that they received from critics who felt that they were an inconsequential contribution to "serious" conversations about ghosts. The link between Todorov's terminology and During's description of the historical shift towards secular magic begins with a discussion of the "fantastic"—the middle term between the "marvelous" and the "uncanny." Following Todorov's definition, During states that "the fantastic differs from the marvelous because it applies the narrative techniques of realism to describe nonrealist (that is, supernatural) events for which no rational explanations are given."[31] Though inexplicable, a marvel is always "real," whereas something fantastic takes on the appearance of being unreal. A conjuring show or a narrative fits the definition of the fantastic for as long as the ambiguity about the root causes of the apparently "nonrealist" events persists: "the fantastic 'occupies' the duration of this uncertainty."[32] Once the show or text decides in one direction or another, it ceases to be fantastic, and becomes either marvelous or uncanny; should the events be revealed to have a natural explanation, the piece is considered marvelous; should the events lack a natural explanation, suggesting the possibility of supernatural agency, the piece is considered uncanny.

Todorov's definition of the fantastic therefore contains an inherent commitment to the principle of suspense, which also links it with the unresolved and suspended nature of a ghost's existence. Roland Barthes identifies suspense as the experience of being held in an "open

[31] During 31.

[32] Ibid. 31.

sequence," "an open paradigm," and/or a "logical disorder."[33] A fantastic narrative establishes such an open paradigm by disrupting the normal conditions of one's understanding and temporarily rendering explanation impossible; until an explanation is provided, the reader is held in suspense. Prior to that open sequence lies the world as it was previously understood, and on the far side of it lies either new understanding (the marvelous) or the unsettling awareness that something exists in the world that lies forever beyond one's ken (the uncanny). This structure is analogous to that which defines the ghost's existence, and it contains tremendous potential for an Enlightenment project committed to the ideal of progress.[34] The encounter with the fantastic generates the possibility for resolution into a new and undiscovered future. For as long as the fantastic continues to resolve into the marvelous—enriching one's understanding of the world through natural or rational explanations—then the temporary disruption will only contribute to the vision of Enlightenment progress. During undervalues the category of the "marvelous" in eighteenth-century culture and literature.[35] Ghosts played a central role in Enlightenment discourse because they played on the tension between fantastic and marvelous occurrences, even after people generally stopped believing in their ontological reality. Despite this intellectual disbelief, ghosts were capable of generating ambiguity and of suspending the normal conditions

[33] Roland Barthes and Lionel Duiset, "An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative," in *New Literary History*, Vol 6, No. 2 (Winter 1975): 267.

[34] The strong identification of suspense as characteristic of the literature and philosophical discourse of the late Enlightenment is also unusual, as suspense has been more readily identified in scholarship of literature from the nineteenth century and the very end of the eighteenth century. See Caroline Levine, *The Serious Pleasures of Suspense: Victorian Realism and Narrative Doubt* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia Press, 2003).

[35] Riccardo Capofero also attempts to broaden the understanding of how the category of the "fantastic" contributed to human culture during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He argues that both apparition narratives and also stories of imaginary voyages managed to be "fantastic," despite the lack of a clear division between the "natural" and the "supernatural." See *Empirical Wonder: Historicizing the Fantastic, 1660-1760* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010).

of understanding long enough to establish the conditions for the emergence of a new and marvelous future.

Overview of Ghosts and Ghost Stories in the 18th Century

The following section offers an overview of the various discourses and diverse textual forms through which ghosts were considered in eighteenth-century Germany. This overview demonstrates the transition from serious considerations of the ghost's ontological reality to literary representations of ghosts in fictional texts. It also demonstrates that this shift did not occur quickly or neatly; it was a gradual process of active re-categorization that lasted throughout the eighteenth century. The active transition from treating ghosts as possibly real to treating them as clearly fictional has gone mostly unexamined, but calling attention to it will set the stage for considering the central role that ghosts played in the Enlightenment. It also encourages us to think beyond the simple opposition between Enlightenment and superstition and recognize the role that older beliefs played in shaping the Enlightenment project.

Many scholars who have considered ghosts in the eighteenth century still make use of a clear-cut distinction between superstition and reason when describing the surprising proliferation of ghost narratives. Gero von Wilpert, for example, slightly modifies the classic metaphor of light and darkness to suggest that the eighteenth-century interest in ghosts was a natural counterpart to its commitment to reason. He writes that although "die klare Helle des Tages sollte in alle dunklen Winkel und geheimen Schlupflöcher der Unvernunft dringen und ihr den Garaus machen," the darkness of night always falls, and in that darkness "kamen alle jene Affekte wieder zutage, die das rationale Bewußtsein in den dunklen Untergrund der Gefühle, der

Seele, der Instinkte, mithin des Irrationalen, verdrängt hatte."[36] Wilpert imagines reason and superstition as the complementary natural phenomena of daytime and nighttime, making the two into a permanent synchronic pair. While this offers a possible explanation for the continued presence of a discourse on ghosts in the Age of Reason, it treats reason and superstition as naturally and purely opposing terms. The following overview of ghosts in eighteenth-century texts moves beyond that simple opposition.

To overcome the simplistic understanding of reason and superstition as a naturally-opposed pairing, one must think diachronically about the discourse on ghosts throughout the eighteenth century. Richard Alewyn articulates a more nuanced understanding of this period by identifying a gap between people's affective and intellectual experiences of apparently supernatural phenomena. His understanding is fundamentally diachronic, as he describes this period undergoing an irreversible transition from an epoch of fear to an epoch without fear.[37] In Alewyn's description, most people prior to the Enlightenment felt an almost universal fear of things such as mountains, thunderstorms and the nighttime; in prior ages, this fear was not entirely groundless, as there were fewer ways for people to protect themselves from the threats of natural elements. At one time, these fears would have been considered rational and appropriate; it is only once the predominant culture came to favor reason and to benefit from technological advances offering protection that these fears came to be considered "superstitious." A fear is only superstitious when it is directed at "vernünftig nicht begründbaren Bedrohungen."[38]

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[36] Gero von Wilpert, *Die deutsche Gespenstergeschichte: Motiv, Form, Entwickelung* (Stuttgart: A. Kröner, 1994): 98.

[37] Alewyn 307-309.

[38] Ibid. 309.

This transition to having fewer and fewer rational reasons to fear anything led to a peculiar mixture of intellectual and affective experiences; an emboldened spirit of inquiry and intellectual curiosity encountered an inherited set of fears from times when they were still justified. Alewyn identifies the conflict of intellect and affect in the eighteenth century primarily within the discourse on the sublime.[39] As reason gains ground and technological advances continue to domesticate the natural world, prior sites of fear become fascinating undiscovered territories that hold tremendous attraction for the inquiring mind. Though this discourse tended to focus on the natural sublime, rather than on belief in or experience of the supernatural, it is established around a similar structure of suspense and resolution. The encounter with the sublime produces an overwhelming feeling or fear that temporarily suspends the normal conditions of the beholder's experience; this fear, however, has been made edifying and pleasurable because the beholder can intellectually assume a position of safety, and eventually, it resolves into an expanded understanding as the beholder finds himself able to integrate this new and sublime marvel into his understanding. The ability to assume a position of safety is the gift that reason bestows to fear: the growth of a discourse offering reasonable explanations for groundless fears, as well as the continued development of technological advances offering protection from the elements, provided assurance to the intellect that nothing harmful lies behind the object of fear. In return, fear gifted to reason the excitation of affect that resulted in an attraction towards undiscovered places and bold new thoughts. The lingering fears of a pre-Enlightenment age drove the newly-reasonable mind towards new and uncharted territories, and as such, participated in the expansion of human knowledge.

[39] This discourse will not feature prominently in this dissertation, though some of the writers under discussion, such as Schiller and Kant, also wrote significant works on the sublime.

Although the discourse on the natural sublime did not play an active role in the discourse on ghosts and ghost stories, it is established around a similar structure of suspense and resolution and also predicated on a productive mix of conflicting affective and intellectual experiences. Ghosts were greeted with a blend of intellectual disbelief and affective credulity in the eighteenth century, perhaps best demonstrated in Madame du Deffand's witty assertion: "I do not believe in ghosts, but I am afraid of them." Alewyn has his own witticism for describing the split between intellectual distance and affective engagement that characterizes the eighteenth-century attitude towards ghosts and the supernatural: "Es stellte sich nämlich heraus, daß es den Ideen der Aufklärung schneller gelang, die Vernunft zu belehren als die Instinkte zu bekehren."[40] Given this split between affective and intellectual attitudes, it is unsurprising that ghosts should feature as central concerns of both philosophical and fictional texts. The history of the discourse on ghosts in the eighteenth century shows that they were treated both as possibly real and also as obviously fictional phenomena produced either through conscious deceptions or mistaken impressions. The eighteenth century is considered, by scholars of the ghost story as a literary genre, to be the pre-history of the form's heyday in the nineteenth century. Precisely because of the transitional role that ghosts played in eighteenth century discourse, intentionally and self-consciously literary ghost stories where not common until the 1780s and '90s.

The ghost story collections of the nineteenth century did, however, draw heavily from those of earlier centuries for both form and content, though the role that those collections played in the discourse altered significantly. The *Gespensterbuch*, collected by Apel and Laun and first published in 1810,[41] is recognized as one of the first significant collections marking the

[40] Alewyn 317.

[41] August Apel and Friedrich Laun, *Gespensterbuch* (Leipzig: G. J. Göschen, 1810-1816).

inauguration of the "ghost story" as a nineteenth century literary form;[42] many of the stories were taken from the folk tradition, but they were rewritten by the collectors and established or codified many of the conventions that define the genre. This collection, however, actually stems from a (sub)literary form dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries. These *Gespensterbücher* of the early modern period were written records of an oral story-telling tradition; they serve as good examples of what Keith Thomas terms "popular magic." Popular magic included both "the practical use of charms, conjurations, amulets and medical spells to deal with problems in the world," as well as "symbols and narratives: ghost stories, omens, and signifiers."[43] Opposition to the traditional beliefs perpetuated by these collections began as early as the seventeenth century, when Thomas Hobbes wrote in *Leviathan* (1651) against "Invisible Agents," suggesting that no thinking person could truly believe them to be real.[44] At the time Hobbes was writing, the *Gespensterbücher* were evidently read as documents containing stories of true supernatural occurrences; between then and the early nineteenth century, such collections shifted from being viewed as documentary records to fictional stories.

This transition occurred largely during the eighteenth century, when the line distinguishing fictional ghost stories from philosophical consideration of ghosts was not yet clearly drawn. In the eighteenth century, authors writing in the tradition of earlier

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[42] The major works centering on the literary genre of the ghost story include Gero von Wilpert's book, cited above, and also: Muriel Stiffler, *The German Ghost Story as Genre* (New York: P. Lang, 1993); and Benno von Diederich, *Von Gespenstergeschichten: Ihrer Technik und Ihrer Literatur* (Leipzig: Schmidt & Spring, 1903); Dietrich Weber "Die Gespenstergeschichte" in *Formen der Literatur: In Einzeldarstellungen*, edited by Otto Knörich (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1981): 136-142.

[43] During 11.

[44] Cf. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviation*, edited by C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968): 169-172.

Gespensterbücher played an active role in conversations about whether ghosts were real. For example, Otto von Graben zum Stein's 1731 collection, *Unterredungen aus dem Reiche der Geister*, is staged primarily as a debate between two characters named Pneumatophilus and Andrenio; Penumatophilus believes in ghosts, but Andrenio does not. In addition to containing early versions of several important ghost stories, the *Unterredungen* is clearly intended as an active defense against those who claim that believing in ghosts is pure superstition. Pneumatophilus regularly and easily convinces Andrenio that ghosts are real, and the reader is clearly meant to be convinced as well. An extensive collection of ghost stories from 1753 is subtitled *Nebst gründlichen Beweis, daß es würklich Gespenster gebe*, thus betraying its similar persuasive aspirations; that was followed by a 500 page collection from the same author in 1756.[45]

By the second half of the eighteenth century, however, the disbelief in ghosts grew strong enough that authors who were invested in the project of Enlightenment turned the genre of the *Gespensterbuch* against itself; they published collections of "ghost stories" that were intended to debunk the belief in ghosts. Georg Adam Keyser developed a series of books dedicated to contradicting the "lächerlichen Aberglauben, daß es Hexen, Gespenster und dergleichen Erscheinungen gebe," entitled *Uhuhu oder Hexen- Gespenster- Schatzgräber- und Erscheinungsgeschichten* (first volume 1785).[46] In 1792, both Karl von Eckartshausen and Cajetan Tschink published similar *Gespensterbücher* containing ghost stories with natural or

[45] Anonymous, *Sammlung vieler auserlesener und seltener Geschichte und merkwürdiger Begebenheiten, welche sich mit erscheinenden, werfenden und rumorenden Poltergeistern, Vorboten der Todes-Fälle, Hexengespenstern, Zaubern, Zauberinnen, Schatzgräbern u.d.g. an vielen Orten zugetragen hat. Nebst gründlichem Beweis, daß es würklich Gespenster gebe* (Nürnberg, 1753); *Neue Sammlung merckwürdiger Geschichte* (Nürnberg, 1756).

[46] Georg Adam Keyser, *Uhuhu oder Hexen-, Gespenster-, Schatzgräber- und Erscheinungs-Geschichten* (Erfurt: 1786).

rational explanations; Eckartshausen's book even made an effort at being somewhat scholarly, drawing on the writings and theories of Schiller's teacher Jakob Friedrich Abel.[47] The most famous and also most successful of these *Gespensterbücher* with an Enlightenment agenda was Samuel Christoph Wagener's *Die Gespenster: Kurze Erzählungen aus dem Reiche der Wahrheit* (1797-1800), which he expanded in a second volume entitled *Neue Gespenster* (1801-1802).[48] Both books were a huge success among the reading public.

Ghosts were not only a popular topic in these collections of stories; evidencing the fact that the belief in ghosts lingered well into the eighteenth century, a complementary conversation about the reality of ghosts was taking place in a number of popular philosophical texts, with arguments made both in favor of and against the belief in ghosts. Some of the earliest examples appeared around the same time as the *Unterredungen aus dem Reiche der Geister,*[49] but in the middle of the century, a rapid and active exchange about the reality of ghosts appeared in a series of texts. Several decades following that, popular philosophical considerations of ghosts featured prominently in journals such as the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, with writers such as Johann August Eberhard and Friedrich Nicolai contributing actively to the conversation. As shown in chapter one of this dissertation, which looks at an article Eberhard wrote about the story of the *Weiße Frau,* the distinction between these popular philosophical texts and other ghost stories is

[47] Karl von Eckhartshausen, *Sammlung der merckwürdigsten Visionen, Erscheinungen, Geister- und Gespenstergeschichten. Nebst einer Ausweisung dergleihen Vorfälle vernünftig zu untersuchen, und zu beurtheilen* (München, 1792); Cajetan Tschink, *Wundergeschichten sammt den Schlüßeln zu ihrer Erklärung* (Wien, 1792).

[48] Samuel Christoph Wagener, *Die Gespenster: Kurze Erzählungen aus dem Reiche der Wahrheit* (Berlin, 1798); *Neue Gespenster: Kurze Erzählungen aus dem Reiche der Wahrheit Vol 2* (Berlin, 1802).

[49] For example: *Schriftmaßige und venünifftige Gedanken von Gespenstern*, (1731, Carolus Bohemus, eigentlich Johann Friedrich Bertram)

not always clear; Eberhard employs many of the same techniques found in ghost narratives to construct his argument against the existence of ghosts. Kant does something similar in his 1766 work *Träume eines Geistersehers*, which is analyzed in chapter two. These philosophical works were not only inflected by narrative qualities, they also occasionally influenced literary culture. Nicolai's articles in the 1780's and '90's, along with Justus Christian Hennings' famous books *Von den Ahndungen und Visionen* (1777-1783) and *Von Geistern und Geistersehen* (1780), were culturally significant enough to affect the literary culture of Weimar classicism—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe actively mocked Nicolai's efforts to debunk ghost stories in *Faust I* and wrote to Schiller in January 1795 that that his work in the *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* was intended as a partial refutation of Hennings.

Apart from this minor influence on Goethe late in the eighteenth century, these ghost story collections and philosophical works—all of which were not quite purely literary and not quite purely philosophical—did not have any direct connection with high literary culture and tradition. This is largely due to the fact that aesthetic theory considered ghosts an unsuitable topic for literature throughout most of the eighteenth century.[50] Although ghosts were not addressed directly in that theory, they can be interpreted as part of the debate about "das Wunderbare" that dates back at least to Gottsched's *Critische Dichtkunst* (1730). According to Gottsched, all things supernatural did not properly belong to the realm of literature. "Natürlichkeit, Glaubhaftigkeit, und Wahrscheinlichkeit" were the values according to which literature of that period of time was measured, and ghosts were simply no longer believable. In *Critische Dichtkunst*, he made it clear that they were no longer proper subjects for contemporary authors and poets: "Das Wunderbare muß noch allezeit in den Schranken der Natur bleiben, und

[50] Cf. Wilpert 105-112.

nicht zu hoch steigen."[51] As ghosts did not evidently exist within the bounds of nature, art should not represent them, for the highest aspiration of art, in Gottsched's view, should be the imitation of what is natural.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the standards of believability that Gottsched established slowly loosened so as to allow an ever greater number of topics within the realm of acceptable art. Eventually, ghosts would slip into literature through a kind of backdoor. This began with Bodmer and Breitinger's arguments against Gottsched, in which they gently challenged his strict standards around depictions of "das Wunderbare." They allowed that the forces of the imagination could extend beyond a simple imitation of the natural world to include things that were part of the "probable world." For example, Bodmer defended Milton against Gottsched's criticisms, suggesting that since many peopled believed in the probable existence of spiritual figures from the Christian spiritual world, Milton's epic poem counted as good literature. Their revision of Gottsched, however, did not go so far as to include the ghostly figures of folk mythology, which were clearly the product of superstition and did not have the same kind of probable existence.

Bodmer and Breitinger did, however, begin to lay the groundwork for Lessing's crucial discussion of ghosts in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* by seeking ways to excuse the ghosts that appear in Shakespeare's plays. Since Shakespeare was becoming an increasingly important figure in German drama—largely as a means of imagining an alternative to the dominance of French drama—it was important to find a way to excuse the fact that ghosts play a central role in several of his plays, most notably *Hamlet*. Bodmer and Breitinger compromised on the question

[51] Johann Christian Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst* in *Ausgewählte Werke*, edited by Joachim Birke and Brigitte Birke (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973).

of "believability" when it came to these ghosts; they reasoned that, since the historical characters depicted onstage would plausibly have believed in ghosts, it was acceptable to feature such apparitions. They expected that the Enlightened audience might not believe the ghost itself, but they could certainly entertain the idea that the characters might believe in it. The supernatural figure belongs to this understanding of the "probable" world because it is probable that such figures might be part of the psychology of characters from an earlier time. This begins to carve out a space for ghosts in literature and gradually facilitates the movement towards understanding ghosts as fictional figures.[52]

In the 10th through 12th parts of his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1767), Lessing discusses a similar justification for having ghosts appear onstage,[53] but his considerations are notably inflected by a different set of assumptions about his audience's credulity and a clearer sense of the ghost as a fictional figure. Whereas Bodmer and Brietinger sought to legitimate the supernatural as a viable subject for art against objections that a rational age should not be tempted to indulge such unbelievable topics, Lessing was concerned with depictions of ghosts in the theater that failed to ignite the appropriate mood and affect in the incredulous audience members. Lessing already assumes that the Enlightened audience—his contemporaries—no longer shares this outdated belief in the existence of ghosts, and as such, their appearance on the stage risks damaging or destroying the illusion of the theater. The danger posed by the depiction of a ghost is not the disruption of the Enlightenment, but rather the disruption of the art; he wants to understand how artwork can depict the supernatural while still retaining its immersive hold on

[52] Cf. Wilpert 108-109.

[53] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "Hamburgische Dramaturgie" in *Werke und Briefe in Zwölf Bänden* Vol 6, edited by Klaus Bohnen (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag): 231-245.

the audience members. This is why he critiques the production of Voltaire's *Semiramis* (1748), staged at the Hamburg Nationaltheater on April 29, 1767: that production's ghost appeared in broad daylight ("wider alle guten Sitten unter den Gespenstern") and completely interrupted the illusion of the piece.[54] Remarking that "der Same, sie zu glauben, liegt in uns allen," Lessing asserts that the dramatist should be able to capture the feelings of the audience, despite all resistance of "kalte Vernunft."[55] Artwork containing depictions of the supernatural must therefore exist in tension with an ever-more-Enlightened society that is less inclined to believe in it. To preserve the illusion of the theater against such challenging audiences, Lessing also remarks on the importance of capitalizing on the psychology of a prior age. The audience must be made to identify with the characters onstage who, being themselves un-Enlightened, will experience genuine fear and terror when presented with ghostly figures; the audience, having connected with those characters, will experience that fear through the characters and remain within the illusion of the piece while also maintaining their position as audience members from the Age of Enlightenment.

Bodmer, Breitinger and Lessing's arguments for the presence of the supernatural in theater indirectly created an opening for the *Gespensterballaden* and *Kunstmärchen* of the 1770's and 1780's, which brought ghosts more fully into German literature; prior to that point, ghosts only appeared in poems and stories where it was abundantly clear that the "ghost" was not real, but was usually a person dressed up as a ghost for some reason.[56] These texts were generally intended to be humorous, and included early poems by Lessing himself, such as *Die*

[54] Lessing 239.

[55] Ibid. 238.

[56] Wilpert 112-116.

Gespenster (1747) and the *Geist des Salomo* (1759).[57] These ghosts are not meant to frighten or terrorize, but merely to amuse. In *Die Gespenster*, for example, the narrator of the poem claims to hear strange sounds constantly coming from his daughter's room at night; he is convinced it is a ghost, but the reader becomes aware, from the context of the rest of the poem, that the noises are actually caused by nightly visits from a lover that the father is not aware of.

These various forms of rational fiction, which occasionally allowed for the depiction of clearly false "ghosts," stand in sharpest contrast to the tradition of the *Gespensterballaden* that arose in the 1770's and 1780's during the Sturm und Drang movement. These ballads conform, if unintentionally, to the guidelines that Lessing outlined in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. Since some of the first prominent examples of these *Gespensterballaden* were presented as collections of poems from an earlier age,[58] they were indirectly insulated from the aesthetic demand for believability; like the ghosts that appear in Shakespeare's plays, these ballads could be read as documenting the psychological experience of people in an earlier, more credulous age. The Enlightenment reader could appreciate these poems with the protection of historical distance and without having to believe in the existence of ghosts themselves. At the same time, poets writing these ghost ballads often sought to cultivate an eerie mood any time they did a public reading, thereby appealing to an innate tendency to believe and to become immersed in the affective

[57] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "Die Gespenster" in *Werke und Briefe in Zwölf Bänden* Vol 1, edited by Klaus Bohnen (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag): 104-106. "Der Geist des Salomo" in *Werke und Briefe in Zwölf Bänden* Vol 4, edited by Klaus Bohnen (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag): 329-330.

[58] For example, James MacPherson, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, 1760* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1966); Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry , Consisting of Old Ballads, Sonds and Other Pieces of Our Earlier Poets* (New York: Dover Publications, 1966).

experience of the poem.[59] Lessing had recommended this sort of mood cultivation for theater pieces that depicted ghosts. The supposition of historical distance meant that these ballads did not challenge the intellectual assumptions of the Enlightenment, but they still sought to cultivate an eerie and frightening affective environment for their audiences.[60] Shortly after the heyday of the *Gespensterballaden*, Karl August Musäus wrote an influential *Kunstmärchen* entitled *Die Entführung* (1787) that is recognized by some as the first German ghost story.[61] The story was later adapted by Matthew Lewis as the episode of the Bleeding Nun in his famous novel *The Monk*.[62] Like the *Gespensterballaden*, Musäus's tale is written as though it were an old folk tale, even though the story was actually his own.

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[59] Cf. Benno von Wiese, *Die Deutsche Lyrik I*; (Düsseldorf, A. Bagel: 1957), 196.

[60] There were also counter-examples—*Gespensterballaden* more in the vein of the Enlightenment's rational ghost stories. Poems such as "Hanns Robert" by Johann Friedrich Löwen, "Die durch den Teufel bestrafte Strenge der ehrbaren Frau Sibylla" by Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter, and "Das Nachtgespenst" by Reichel all follow some of the formal characteristics of the folk ballad but deliver ironic messages mocking the belief in ghosts.

[61] Cf. Patrick Bridgwater, *The German Gothic Novel in Anglo-German Perspective* (New York: Rodopi, 2013).

[62] During the 1790's, the English reading public thought of German literature as the source for many of the more gruesome, lurid and frightful stories that were published and avidly consumed. Some publishing houses and authors used this association between German literature and risqué material as a way of excusing and marketing some of their publications: if a book was written "in the German fashion," or even presented as a translation of a (non-existent) German original, then its English purveyors were not responsible for its content, but benefited from the public's desire for it. Matthew Lewis was not only one of these English authors writing "in the German fashion," he also borrowed from German literature for material. Stealing or recombining German stories in English Gothic novels was a common practice at the time: one translation of Karl Kahlert's novel *Der Geisterbanner* augmented the unfinished novel by seamlessly tacking on Schiller's story "Der Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre" at the end. Cf. Matthew Lewis, *The Monk: A Romance* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998); Karl Friedrich Kahlert, *The Necromancer, or, The Tale of the Black Forest: Founded on Facts*, translated by Peter Teuthold, edited by Jeffrey Cass (Chicago: Valancourt Books, 2007).

In 1787, the same year that Musäus's story "Die Entführung" appeared, Friedrich Schiller also published the first installment of his novel fragment *Der Geisterseher*, which would come to be one of the most prominent inspirations for an outpouring of novels in the 1790's. These popular novels have been relegated to the category of *Trivialliteratur* within the German canon and include numerous subgenres: the *Gespensterromane, Geisterromane, Geheimbundromane, Räuberromane,* and *Ritterromane.* Schiller's *Geisterseher* is not the only important influence for these works of popular fiction: other plays and novels from the *Sturm und Drang* period including Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* and Schiller's *Die Räuber* were also prominent inspirations. The specific subgenres related to the depiction of ghosts, however, take their primary cues from Schiller's unfinished work. Though the label "Gothic" literature was long understood to be primarily a category of English literature, recent scholarship has come to show that it was actually an international phenomenon that included French and German literature as well;[63] these popular novels were a major part of Germany's contribution to that Gothic canon, and many of them were translated into English and directly influenced works such as Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*.[64] Some of these *Gespenster-* and *Geheimbundromane* are examples of the "explained supernatural," wherein all of the ostensibly supernatural occurrences are given natural or rational explanations; others depict "real" supernatural figures, but in this case, the

[63] Cf. Andrew Cusack and Barry Mundane (editors), *Popular Revenants: The German Gothic and Its Literary Reception, 1800-2000* (Rochester: Camden House, 2012); Daniel Hall, *French and German Gothic Fiction in the Late Eighteenth Century* (New York: P. Lang, 2005).

[64] *Northanger Abbey* contains the famous list of "horrid novels," which one of the characters recommends to her friend upon learning that her friend is enjoying reading Ann Radcliffe's *The Scilian*. Included in that list are several translations of German novels, including Kahlert's *The Necromancer* and Karl August Grosse's *Der Genius. Aus den Papieren des Marquis C* von G***, which was then translated as *Horrid Mysteries*, translated by Peter Will (London, 1796).

ghosts that appear are usually intended as clear allegories for good and evil, the equivalent of an angel and a devil who seek to influence the actions and morality of the novel's main character.[65]

These novels became enormously popular and were read voraciously by a reading public that was growing rapidly, thanks in large part to the educational efforts of the Enlightenment. Many of the concerns expressed about the *Lesewut* or reading madness of the late eighteenth century referred directly or indirectly to these popular novels, including the ones about ghosts. Sharp criticism was also levied against these novels for not taking the supernatural seriously enough; unlike more considered, philosophical discussions of the existence of ghosts, these works treated the topic lightly while also unhealthily engaging the readers' affective response. By that point, such criticism could no longer touch these novels because their engagement with ghosts had crossed over into a new realm; in the *Gespensterromane*, ghosts now belonged firmly to fiction and were used to generate mood and atmosphere without participating in conversations about their factual existence. The transitional period of the eighteenth century was reaching its conclusion, and the literary "ghost story" of the nineteenth century was on the horizon.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The first chapter of this dissertation analyzes three versions of the famous *Weiße Frau* story composed over the course of the eighteenth century. The three authors in consideration

[65] The definitive scholarly work on the popular novels of the 1790's, including these *Geister*- and *Gespensterromane* is Michael Hadley's *The Undiscovered Genre: A Search for the German Gothic Novel* (Las Vegas: P. Lang, 1978). Hadley recognizes the distinction between novels written in the tradition of Schiller's *Geisterseher*, which offer explanations for the supernatural, and novels written in the tradition of Spieß, which do not justify the ontological reality of the spirits, but use them as allegories for good and evil as the rest of the action unfolds. It is significant that most of Spieß' novels also take place in the past, whereas Schiller's novel and those that follow it are set in contemporary times; this may have something to do with the texts' differing attitudes on the ontological reality of the spirits they present.

approach the story in radically different ways and my analysis traces the evolution of the ghost's status, from ontological quandary to literary figure. During this shift, the relationship between the apparition and its beholder changes, which also alters the function that suspense plays within each work. The first version comes from one of the *Gespensterbücher* mentioned above: Otto von Graben zum Stein's collection *Unterredungen aus dem Reiche der Geister* contains a significant rendition of the *Weiße Frau*. In recounting this narrative and others like it, Graben zum Stein contributes to the debate about the ontological reality of ghosts, taking a stand against those who deny their reality. Fifty years later, in the first issue of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, Johann August Eberhard writes an interpretation of the story that provides a material explanation for the apparition. His article is aimed at debunking the ontological reality of the ghost, but he strategically uses the *Weiße Frau* as a textual figure in the construction of his argument. The third story is a satirical piece written in the 1780's by a young Jean Paul Richter (1763-1825). His report on an encounter with the spirit does not address her factual reality, but uses her as a fictional character to subvert his audience's expectations and deliver a critique of contemporary society.

Chapter two examines Kant's 1766 text *Träume eines Geistersehers erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*, and argues that, despite its explicit engagement with the ontological debate regarding ghosts, this text is structured like a narrative. Responding to reports of the theologian/mystic Emanuel Swedenborg's psychic feats, Kant spends the first part of his text entertaining the possibility of seeing spirits, only to mock Swedenborg and spirit-seeing in the second part. This two-part structure is strategic; the initial section allows Kant to employ the ghost as a textual figure and associate it with both Swedenborg and the philosophical systems and presuppositions that he had begun to question. Temporarily suspending his judgment about

the reality of ghosts, Kant conjures a spirit by defining it with the terms of speculative metaphysics. He then uses that specter to frighten himself and others off the path of misguided thinking. This chapter demonstrates that the *Träume* reads like a prototype for narratives of the explained supernatural, using the ghost as a figure in the text to open new critiques and possibilities in the realm of philosophy.

My third chapter considers Karl Philipp Moritz's unfinished piece, *Fragmente aus dem Tagebuch eines Geistersehers*, and draws attention to its metaphoric suggestion that the act of ghost-seeing is analogous to the practice of reading or contemplating art. By moving away from the affective registers of fear and dread, Moritz's text suggests the possibility of a willing and conscious encounter with the aesthetic supernatural. The potential for a more esoteric Enlightenment, enabled by such an encounter, resonates with the rhetoric of initiation and of Freemasonry; Scholars have therefore tended to read this as an essayistic work in which Moritz espouses his thoughts on those topics. My reading, by contrast, emphasizes the literary nature of the piece, drawing out its inherent tensions, exploring the relationships between its characters and analyzing its formal experimentation. In this way, I show that the *Fragmente* models a different type of ghost story than those analyzed in chapter one. It avoids immersive, suspenseful narration and instead teaches its reader to consider the work as a whole, pulling together disparate parts by connecting distinct images and recurrent motifs. The process of aesthetic reception modeled and encouraged by the *Fragmente* is identified with the achievement of an elevated perspective that transcends the sequential unfolding of the narrative. I show that, ultimately, the text draws an analogy between this technique of achieving an overview perspective (*Überblick*) and the supernatural (*übernatürlich*) practice of ghost-seeing.

Chapter four analyzes Friedrich Schiller's novel, *Der Geisterseher*, as a text that demonstrates a contrary aesthetics—unfolding a tightly suspenseful narrative that propels its characters and its readers forward from one event to the next, even as it exhibits a suspicious attitude toward suspense. The primary victim is a character, the Prince, who is ensnared in the political machinations of a shadowy society headed by a man known only as the Armenian. The Prince's downfall has generally been understood as resulting from his poor education and incomplete Enlightenment—he is duped because he fails as an Enlightenment subject. My reading challenges this assumption through close readings of passages in which the Prince exercises reason in the face of unbelievable occurrences. I argue that his predictable exercise of reason, as specifically anticipated by the Armenian, actually contributes to his deception. Though Eberhard and other Enlightenment thinkers use the suspense generated by the ghostly encounter to establish the conditions for progress, Schiller demonstrates the manipulative and deceptive potential inherent in this practice.

The fifth and final chapter of this dissertation examines three works from different moments in the career and life of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Each of the works discussed—*Claudine von Villa Bella, Der Groß-Cophta*, and *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*—critiques popular stories about ghosts and ghost-seers, albeit in different ways. Goethe holds in low regard the attempts made by Enlightenment thinkers to contain the frightening potency of ghost stories by inscribing them into narratives that privilege cause-and-effect as an explanatory structure; like Schiller, he is wary of the dangerous potential and linear progression of narratives built around suspense. Within Goethe's work, I recognize the suspicion that such narratives generally prove useless as a means of generating cognitive activity and generally results in one of the following two outcomes: either all thinking is swallowed up by the affective atmosphere

of the supernatural (as seen in *Claudine von Villa Bella*), or the insistence on cause-and-effect devolves into pure formalism, annihilating meaning altogether (as seen in *Der Groß-Cophta*). In the *Unterhaltungen*, Goethe creates a series of ghost stories that attempt to move beyond the limitations of suspense and cause-and-effect narration. The supernatural occurrences in these stories are linked, in the sense that they have clear thematic connections and recurrent motifs, but these connections do not suggest a causal chain or yield material explanations for supernatural phenomena. I argue that this constitutes an alternative "supernatural aesthetics," not dissimilar to the one Moritz developed in the *Fragmente*—one that calls upon the reader to make connections between various details and understand the narrative holistically. By suppressing suspense and inviting the reader to contemplate seemingly "supernatural" phenomena as though they were "natural," Goethe also shifts his ghost stories away from the category of fantastic literature and reasserts the edifying cognitive value of the ghost story as a marvel.

CHAPTER ONE:
A GHOST, A GRAMMATICAL ERROR, AND A REVOLUTIONARY: THREE RENDITIONS OF THE *WEIßE FRAU* IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Beginning in the Middle Ages, in castles and aristocratic households all across the German-speaking region from Berlin to Bohemia, people recurrently reported sightings of the *Weiße Frau*, a female apparition clad all in white. Though she would appear in disparate locations, the public understood her as a single ghost and believed that her appearance always foretold the same imminent misfortune—the death of a male member of that household. Perhaps because she dramatically heralded death or perhaps because she was seen by so many people, the *Weiße Frau* became one of the most famous European ghosts. Well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both English and German publications continued to reference her and even to report new sightings.[66] Numerous nineteenth century publications report "recent sightings" of the ghost in the Berlin palace around the middle of the century. Hers is not a story that remains in the past; it lives on, even into the twenty-first century. A recent article on plans for the

[66] Cf. "Die weiße Frau" in *Curiositäten der physisch-literarisch-artistisch-historischen Vor- und Mitwelt: zur angenehmen Unterhaltung für gebildete Leser*, *Band 9*, edited by Christian August Vulpius (Weimar: Verlag des Landes-Industrie-Comptoirs, 1821-1822): 541-546; Emil Franke, "Die Weiße Frau im Rudolstädter Schlosse in der Nacht zum 10. Oktober, 1906" in *Schwarzburgbote: Beilage zu Landeszeitung für Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt und angrenzende Gebiete Nr. 49* (12/02/1927): 1-2.

reconstruction of the Berliner Stadtschloss muses about whether the *Weiße Frau* will wander the palace after the remodeling is done.[67]

This chapter focuses on three versions of the *Weiße Frau* story by three eighteenth century authors who represent distinctly different attitudes towards the supernatural. Otto von Graben zum Stein (1690-1756) drew largely from seventeenth century sources and presented the story as factual in his three-volume work *Unterredungen von dem Reiche der Geister* (1731 and 1741).[68] The *Unterredungen* argues against such early opponents of the supernatural as Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679),[69] Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677)[70] and Balthasar Bekker[71] and reasserts the reality of ghosts and the spirit world. Fifty years later, in the first issue of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, the theologian and pop philosopher Johann August Eberhard (1739-1809) wrote an interpretation of the *Weiße Frau* story, attempting to provide a material explanation for the apparition. He attributes the legend to a misinterpretation of reports about the tradition of

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[67] Cf. Edelhard Richter, "Die weiße Frau im Berliner Stadtschloß," *Berlin.de* (Januar / February 2015), Web, accessed February 2015. http://www.berlin.de/projekte-mh/netzwerke/spaetlese/themen/berliner-orte/artikel.245422.php

[68] Otto von Graben zum Stein, *Unterredungen von dem Reicher der Geister*, (Leipzig: Samuel Benjamin Walther, Volumes 1 and 2 in 1731, Volume 3 in 1741). All citations to this work will henceforth be made in the text according to the following format: (Stein [volume number]:[page number]).

[69] As a proponent of a one-substance doctrine that united matter and spirit, Hobbes sought to discredit supernatural phenomena such as ghosts; cf. *Leviathan,* edited by C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 169–172.

[70] Spinoza exchanged a series of letters with his friend Hugo Boxel in which the two debated the reality of ghosts, with Spinoza arguing that they are not real. Cf. Baruch Spinoza, *The Chief Works of Baruch Spinoza Vol II.* translated by R. H. M. Elws (1883): 375-388, available online via http://www.sacred-texts.com/phi/spinoza/corr/index.htm

[71] Balthasar Bekker was an important opponent of superstition in the late seventeenth century. His famous book, *De Betoverde Weereld* (1691), became famous and argued against all manner of apparently supernatural phenomena.

dressing in white clothing whenever a member of the household dies.[72] Eberhard's piece is written in an Enlightenment tradition that disavows the old ghosts and superstitions, seeking rational or material explanations for phenomena that appear to be supernatural; other examples of this tradition include the investigation of the "Spuk in Tegel" or Friedrich Nicolai's report to the Berlin Academy of Science about how he rid himself of ghostly visions. Also in the 1780's, the young Jean Paul (1763-1825), writing under the pen name J. P. F. Hasus, repurposes the *Weiße Frau* as a literary figure for a satirical piece critiquing the shortcomings of contemporary society.[73] Jean Paul's "Bericht" does not address the contested reality of the *Weiße Frau*; it represents a shift away from the philosophical consideration of a ghost's ontological reality and toward the treatment of them as purely fictional.

In the context of this dissertation, these three versions of the same basic story are representative of several divergent explanations that eighteenth century authors offer for the relationship between an apparition and its beholder. These stories demonstrate how ghosts are received by both believers and non-believers, and allow us to examine the shifting nature of suspense and its relationship to the narrative. In the *Unterredungen*, suspense describes the nature of the ghost's existence—between life and the afterlife—and posits a liminal space that suspended souls occupy. The concept of suspense is thereby externalized, imagined as a dimension outside of human consciousness. Nevertheless, witnessing the suspended state of a

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[72] Johann August Eberhard, "Nachtrag zu der Legende von der weißen Frau," in *Berlinische Monatsschrift* (January 1783): 3-22. All citations to this work will henceforth be made in the text according to the following format: (Eberhard [page number]).

[73] Jean Paul "Nachdenklicher aber wahrer Bericht von einer höchst merkwürdigen Erscheinung der WEISSEN FRAU und von den Ursachen, warum sie in der Erde gar nicht ruhen kan" in *Sämtliche Werke Abteilung II: Jugendwerke und vermischte Schriften Erster Band: Jugendwerke I* edited by Norbert Miller (München: Carl Hanser Verlag): 1007-1018. All citations to this work will henceforth be made in the text according to the following format: (*SW* [volume number]:[page number]).

ghost can prompt moral reflection in the beholder, who may be motivated to avoid condemning his own soul to that same suspended condition. In Eberhard's article, the beholder of the apparition denies its reality, but initially cannot explain why it seems to appear. This makes suspense an internal condition; the beholder's worldview is placed in tension with his empirical experience. The narrative of a ghost story becomes useful for Eberhard insofar as it stimulates mental activity and allows readers to progress toward a material explanation for the apparition. For Eberhard, ghost stories inspire readers to approach the world with an Enlightened viewpoint. Jean Paul also gives his readers an experience of internal suspense, though he challenges their preconceptions regarding narrative convention rather than ontology; he surprises and creates suspense by presenting the *Weiße Frau* as a literary figure that specifically subverts readers' expectations of her significance and narrative function. Conventionally heralding death for members of the aristocratic classes, Jean Paul's *Weiße Frau* threatens the aristocracy in a different manner. Unexpectedly espousing the values of liberty, equality and religious tolerance, she becomes a chilling vision of the potential for revolution.

The *Weiße Frau* and the *Unterredungen von dem Reiche der Geister*

The *Unterredungen von dem Reiche der Geister* address the supernatural during a period of shifting paradigms; these stories appeared as popular philosophical texts began to attack superstitious beliefs,[74] but the collection attests to the reality of ghosts and positions itself

[74] This tradition can be traced back at least as early as 1731, when the first two volumes of the *Unterredungen* were published (e.g. Carolus Bohemius, *Schriftmäßige und vernünftige Gedanken von Gespenstern*) and continues in a lively back-and-forth fashion throughout the eighteenth century: for example, Georg Friedrich Meier, *Gedancken von Gespenstern* (1747), contradicted in Johann Georg Sucros' response *Widerlegung der Gedancken von Gespenstern* (1748), and then defended by Meier again in *Vertheidigung der Gedancken von Gespenstern* (1748); or also the two books by Justus Christoph Hennings, *Von den Ahndungen und Visionen*

against Enlightenment efforts to debunk the supernatural. When the first two volumes were published in 1731, their stance on the supernatural was controversial enough to prompt the King to place a 10 year publishing ban on Graben zum Stein.[75] The *Unterredungen* created controversy by re-inscribing old perspectives, not by introducing new ones; Gero von Wilpert identifies this collection as a holdover from the ghost stories commonly circulated among people by word of mouth (*Gespensterbücher*) during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[76] Though a number of other ghost story collections were published later in the century, they primarily contained stories of "the explained supernatural," in which an ostensible ghost is revealed to have a material explanation.[77] The *Unterredungen* is one of the last major collections written in the older tradition; as such, it should not be surprising that its significance quickly faded as it was rapidly made irrelevant by the appearance of texts attacking its attitude towards the supernatural. Still, the *Unterredungen* was culturally significant enough that when Apel and Laun were compiling stories for their 1810 *Gespensterbuch*, they consulted Graben zum Stein's collection

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(1777-83) and *Von Geistern und Geistersehen* (1780), which received backlash not only from Jean Paul (see below), but also Goethe in the form of the *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* (1795).

[75] Cf. Will-Erich Peuckert "Vorwort" in *Die Sagen der Monathlichen Unterredungen Otto von Grabens zum Stein*, edited by Will-Erick Peuckert (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1961): V.

[76] Cf. Gero von Wilpert, *Die deutsche Gespenstergeschichte: Motiv, Form, Entwickelung* (Stuttgart: A. Kröner, 1994):103.

[77] The most popular being Samuel Christoph Wagener's two collections: *Die Gespenster. Kurze Erzählungen aus dem Reiche der Wahrheit* (1797-1800) and *Neue Gespenster* (1801-1802); but also Georg Adam Keyser, *Uhuhu oder Hexen- Gespenster- Schazgräber- und Erscheinungsgeschichte* (1785); Karl von Eckhartshausen, *Sammlung der merkwürdigsten Visionen, Erscheinungen, Geister- und Gespenstergeschichten. Nebst einer Anweisung dergleichen Vorfälle vernünftig zu untersuchen, und zu beurtheilen* (1792); Cajetan Tschink, *Wundergeschichten sammt den Schlüßeln zu ihrer Erklärung* (1792); Gottfried Immanuel Wenzel, *Geister-, Wunder-, Hexen- und Zaubergeschichten vorzüglich neuester Zeit* (1793).

and took a story from it that would then go on to become the basis for Carl Maria von Weber's *Freischütz* opera.[78]

If the significance of the *Unterredungen* is partly defined by its opposition to an emergent intellectual paradigm, the personal history of its author, Otto von Graben zum Stein (1690-1756), is similarly remarkable for its conflict with various religious and cultural groups. Ending up in Prussia, he converted to Lutheranism and became a member of the Prussian king's court, though he was mostly treated as a fool.[79] He eventually received an appointment as Vice President of the *Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1732-1740), a fact that more accurately reflects the king's disdain for the *Akademie* than his high esteem for Graben zum Stein. Despite the publishing ban instituted in 1732, records indicate that Graben zum Stein wrote a piece contributing to the controversy surrounding reports of vampires in Leipzig, an event that stirred up tremendous controversy and posed challenges for a German Enlightenment that was "still relatively young."[80] If the lengthy title[81] is any indication—a small excerpt from it reads *gründlicher Beweis der Erscheinung der Todten unter den Lebendigen*—this was yet another text defending the reality of the supernatural against a growing number of opponents.

The *Unterredungen* makes its case for the reality of the spirit world by staging a debate between two characters about its existence and consistently privileging the arguments in favor of

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[78] Cf. Wilpert 103.

[79] Cf. Peuckert V-VI.

[80] Cf. Susanne Kord, *Murderesses in German Writing, 1720-1860: Heroines of Horror* (New York: Cambridge UP): 43-46.

[81] The full title is reported to have been: *Ottonis Grafens zum Steins unverlohrnes Licht und Recht derer Todten unter den Lebendigen, oder gründlicher Beweis der Erscheinung der Todten unter den Lebendigen, und was jene vor ein Recht in der obern Welt über diese noch haben können, untersucht in Ereignung der vorfallenden Vampyren, oder so genannten Blut-Saugern im Königreich Servien und andern Orten in diesen und vorigen Zeiten*

ghosts. The character of Andrenio is a skeptic, but a weak one—his questions and comments primarily initiate further remarks from Pneumatophilus, who appears quite knowledgeable regarding all matters religious and supernatural. Using arguments and extensive citations from historical sources, Pneumatophilus gains the upper hand and persuades Andrenio to believe in ghosts and the spirit world. During their discussion of the story of the *Weiße Frau*, for instance, Pneumatophilus makes particular reference to the *Miscellanea Historica reni Bohomiae*, a detailed history of Bohemia set down in the seventeenth century by the Jesuit Boleslaus Balbinus (1621-1688). Pneumatophilus uses this document, which draws on "dem Zeugniß vieler hundert Menschen," to support his argument for the reality of this famous apparition (Stein II:90).

The ghost stories that surface throughout these conversations between Pneumatophilus and Andrenio differ from Enlightenment ghost stories in both structure and intent. Pneumatophilus does not approach ghosts with the attitude that would become characteristic of the later Enlightenment; his position is based in belief, and not disbelief, in the spirit world. In the *Unterredungen*, considering an apparition does not produce the temporary suspension of one's worldview, because the inherent tension between understanding ("I do not believe in ghosts") and empirical experience ("I see a ghost") is lacking. Even Andrenio, the ostensible skeptic of the *Unterredungen*, adjusts his perspective when presented with testimonials professing the reality of ghosts. As an introduction to their conversation about the *Weiße Frau*, Andrenio suggests that he and Pneumatophilus discuss stories, "die wegen gnugsamer Erfahrung und glaubwürdiger Zeugnisse nicht leicht können verworffen worden" (Stein II:85). Though Andrenio may be skeptical, his assumptions are not the same as those of an Enlightenment thinker. A thinker like Eberhard, for example, would assume that all ghost stories could be "verworffen," despite a preponderance of empirical evidence; Adrenio is not quick to adopt a

belief in the supernatural, but is not categorically biased against testimonies of empirical experience. The *Unterredungen* suggests that a "superstitious" point of view—one that accepts the reality of the *Geisterwelt*—can be a sensible response to an overwhelming amount of empirical evidence that supports it. No amount of empirical evidence would convince someone like Eberhard; empirical evidence suggesting the supernatural conflicts with but does not overthrow his underlying disbelief in the reality of ghosts. Despite the text's argumentative structure, the ghosts in the *Unterredungen* do not produce the same kind of ideological tension or suspense for Adrenio that they would have for Eberhard or other Enlightenment thinkers.

Though the ghosts of the *Unterredungen* do not incite ideological suspense for Adrenio, they do invoke another discourse that had developed around the concept of suspense—one concerning a spirit's suspension between life and the afterlife. The question of Purgatory was central to the religious debates about the existence of ghosts. Purgatory was considered prerequisite to the ontological possibility of ghosts or spirits of deceased individuals returning to haunt the living; if these spirits were already in heaven or hell, then they would have neither reason nor ability to return to Earth. Since the Reformation dispensed with Purgatory, no Protestant should believe that it was possible for the spirit of a deceased individual to return to earth as a ghost.[82] Perhaps this explains why Catholics were frequently depicted as being duped into believing in false spirits in later Enlightenment collections such as Samuel Christoph Wagener's (1763-1845) *Neue Gespenster. Kurze Geschichten aus dem Reiche der Wahrheit* (1800). In the *Unterredungen*—written by a Catholic-turned-Protestant—the story of the *Weiße Frau* is bookended by lengthy arguments supporting the concept of Purgatory. Pneumatophilus,

[82] Shane McCorristine explicates this history very neatly in his monograph: *Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England, 1750-1920*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010): 27-66.

writing as a Protestant, cites at length from the Bible and from Augustine (among others) to support these claims. He builds his case by elaborating connections between the concept of Purgatory and the doctrine of the Last Judgment. He questions what judgments remain if every soul has already been sent to either Heaven or Hell and argues that the Last Judgment is only necessary if there are still souls being held in suspense when it occurs—neither in Heaven nor Hell, but stuck in a space in-between.

For Pneumatophilus, the doctrine of the Last Judgment opens up a liminal space within which ghosts can be imagined; suspense defines the ghost's liminal existence, but does not necessarily characterize the relationship between the apparition and the beholder. By itself, the suspense of a ghost's existence does not demand ideological resolution within the beholder; it can only be resolved by God through the final act of judging who will be saved and who will be damned. Nevertheless, the confrontation between ghost and beholder still produces questions and prompts investigations. Specifically, as Pneumatophilus writes: "vor allen Dingen wird nöthig seyn, daß wir *den Ursprung* dieses Gespensts untersuchen" (Stein II:88, my emphasis). Here, Pneumatophilus sounds similar to an Enlightenment thinker, but exhibits one notable difference. Because he does not assume that an apparition is simply a materially-produced illusion, he has no reason to seek its cause [*Ursache*]; he does, however, try to trace the phenomenon to a source, telling Andrenio that the most important thing they can do is to look for the ghost's origin [*Ursprung*].

Pneumatophilus's conception of the ghost's *Ursprung* is twofold—requiring both the identification of its former identity as a living person and the discovery of its reason for haunting the earth. The ghost's *Ursprung* seems important to Pneumatophilus for various reasons; for one, learning the identity of a ghost—the identity of the person whose spirit now manifests as a

ghost—further confirms its reality. Pneumatophilus finds additional reinforcement for the ghost's reality in the second aspect of its *Ursprung*—its reason for haunting the world in that particular manner. Drawing heavily on Bilbinus, Pneumatophilus believes he can offer both levels of *Ursprung* for the *Weiße Frau*. First he recounts the various circumstances in which the spirit has manifested, portending death for members of the extended Rosenberg family or compelling various noblemen to observe the tradition of the "süße Brey"—of offering free food to the poor. Using these details, he validates Bilbinus's identification of the *Weiße Frau* as the ghost of Perchta von Rosenberg. Like the *Weiße Frau*, Perchta faithfully observed the tradition of the *süße Brey* and was a member of the Rosenburg family, which explains her appearance in various castles and locations; according to Pneumatophilus, her strong connection with the family line allows her to appear in any location associated with the family. Unlike other ghosts, which attach strongly to particular places, the *Weiße Frau* has attached to a particular lineage—she appears wherever members of the family can be found.

For Pneumatophilus, these attributes shared by the living Perchta and the ghost of the *Weiße Frau* create a link of identity between the two, but do not explain the second half of her *Ursprung*—why her spirit returns as a ghost. He offers an explanation for this by revealing to Adrenio that Perchta had several hardships in love during the course of her life. As a result, he explains, her heart was full of bitterness when she died. He claims that this bitterness must be purged before her soul can ascend to Heaven and that it has caused her spirit to become suspended between the two worlds. Pneumatophilus believes that she can attempt to be purified of this bitterness in the time leading up to the Final Judgment; until her soul is sent in one direction or the other, however, she is doomed to a state of moral suspense.

While these passages on the *Weiße Frau*'s *Ursprung* endorse the reality of the famous ghost, they also claim a moral function for her appearances; understanding the second level of her *Ursprung* is presented as instructive to the beholder, as it can encourage self-reflection on the potentially suspended state of his or her own soul. Pneumatophilus remarks several times on the ways in which the *Weiße Frau*, as a figure who heralds death, encourages reflection on the part of those who see her. In at least one instance cited by Pneumatophilus, her visitation foretells a death that would otherwise have been completely unexpected, thereby enabling the dying man to receive his last rites and save his soul. By upholding the tradition of the *süße Brey*, the *Weiße Frau* additionally encourages others to practice the virtue of charity. Pneumatophilus evaluates the moral function of the ghost towards the end of his discussion of the *Weiße Frau* when he tells Andrenio that

> [die weiße Frau] hat freylich nach ihrem Tode einer sehr starcken Reinigung vernnöthen gehabt, und mag daher wol auf Göttliches Zulassen ihrem ganzen Geschlecht zur Warnung erscheinen, daß ihre Angehörigen noch bey Leb-Zeiten sich durch wahre Busse reinigen sollen (Stein II:112).

The apparition serves as a warning to the living, encouraging them to examine their own potentially problematic moral states and makes changes during the course of their lives, while it is still possible to do so.

Though the *Unterredungen* differs from later Enlightenment texts, it shares their emphasis on tracing an apparition back to its origin—either its *Ursache* or its *Ursprung*. Though defined differently, suspense is also essential to both representations of the ghost; while it is a condition of the ghost's existence in the *Unterredungen,* it characterizes a beholder's response to (ostensible) ghosts in later Enlightenment texts. For the character of Pneumatophilus, the moral suspense of Purgatory generates the ontological possibility for a ghost's existence, and the suspended state in which it exists cannot be resolved until the Last Judgment. But in tracing the

history or origin of the apparition—both its former identity and its reason for being suspended in Purgatory—the beholder is encouraged to self-reflect and resolve moral predicaments prior to death, thereby avoiding his or her own potential moral suspension. The ghost of the *Unterredungen*, whose existence is defined by its own moral suspense, also catalyzes the resolution of moral dilemmas within the person who beholds it.

Eberhard's explanation of the *Weiße Frau* from the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*

As the Enlightenment progresses and the bias against superstition grows, the relationship between ghost and beholder shifts, though variations on the themes of suspense and origin remain integral. In the *Unterredungen,* Pneumatophilus places ghosts in Purgatory, a zone of suspense between Heaven and Hell where they must await the Last Judgment. Ghosts of late Enlightenment texts occupy a similar zone of suspense; they do not reside between Heaven and Hell, but are defined by the distance between disbelief and fear, between understanding and empirical sense. The Enlightenment beholder of an apparition might not believe, intellectually, in what his senses perceive, but his affective response of fear allows the ghost to linger. The beholder's fear-induced suspense—a kind of Purgatory for the Enlightenment subject—does not relegate him to a liminal realm reigned by God; instead, it describes his internal state, brought to resolution when he learns to pass judgment on the apparition himself.

Though there was an extensive tradition of popular philosophical texts attacking supernatural phenomena, this section focuses on the particular efforts of Eberhard, who wrote an article in the initial issue of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* attempting to debunk the story of the *Weiße Frau*. In his critique of the story, Eberhard does not focus on invalidating the ghost; assuming her to be an illusion, he focuses on disavowing the superstitious attitude that he credits

with the production of false perceptions. Eberhard's article was not the only piece in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* to attack superstition in this way. An article that appeared in a later issue similarly discredits the assumption that empirical evidence of the supernatural justifies a superstitious attitude; it attempts to demonstrate, on the contrary, that superstitious assumptions cause the perception of uncanny experiences.[83] In this article, a superstitious woman is driven to despair by the horrible sense that her deceased children are not actually buried in the graves that were dug for them. So desperate is she that she finally demands the graves be reopened so that she can behold the bodies; the coffins are unearthed, and both bodies are found within them. Only then does the woman realize that she has made things worse by disturbing their graves, and her madness deepens. At the end of the account, the author reveals there to be a tradition of stories in that region about children's bodies not actually being in their graves—some time before that, another woman had insisted that her children's bodies be dug up in just the same fashion.

This story quietly but powerfully inverts the *Unterredungen's* implication that uncanny occurrences produce and validate a superstitious mindset; Pneumatophilus and Andrenio both agreed that sufficient empirical evidence of supernatural phenomena was ultimately irrefutable and that it influenced their ultimate conclusions about the nature of reality. This article in the *Monatsschrift* suggests just the opposite—that, in fact, a superstitious mindset influences perception or even produces the seemingly supernatural phenomena. It is an eerie twist to discover that two different women, separated from one another by a significant gap of time, were driven mad by the same suspicion, in the same region, and performed the same unusual action of digging up their children's graves. But the article contends that the current woman's actions were

[83] K. G. Schröder, "Wiederum ein Beispiel vom trauriger Schwärmerei aus Aberglauben" in *Berlinische Monatsschrift* (Berlin: Haube und Spenser, March 1784).

driven by her pre-existing fears; her culturally-conditioned superstitious mindset makes her susceptible to this specific fear without any empirical evidence of it. The article identifies superstition as the source of her fears and unusual actions; it debunks the notion that her eerie repetition of the earlier woman's actions offers evidence of the supernatural and explains it, instead, as the result of a specific superstitious bias. Here, superstition is not represented as the outcome of empirical evidence; instead, the uncanny occurrence is represented as resulting from a culturally-conditioned but ungrounded predilection toward the supernatural.

Though many Enlightenment authors argued against superstition, Eberhard's contributions to the debate were particularly significant, above and beyond his article in the debut issue of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. In 1784, Eberhard edited and wrote the foreword and afterword for a text by Friedrich Wilhelm Klaeden called *Über die Gespenterfurcht. Gespräche und Briefe*.[84] The fact that Eberhard's name is the only one to appear on the book's title page indicates his perceived authority—if Eberhard approved of the book by "ein junger Mann, der sich bisher auf unserer Universität mit vielem Fleiße und gutem Fortgange auf die philosophischen Wissenschaften gelegt hat"[85] then it must indeed be a reputable piece of literature. The text is structured not unlike the *Unterredungen*, as conversations between two people, one of whom "hatte durch Reisen seinen Verstand aufgeklärt"[86] and the other of whom is "auch warm für Wahrheit, aber furchtsam, und nicht so aufgeklärt als jener."[87] In contrast to the *Unterredungen*, however, Klaeden's text discredits superstition, and Eberhard's editorial remarks

[84] Friedrich Wilhelm Klaeden, *Über die Gespensterfurcht. Gespräche und Briefe*, edited and with a foreward and afterword by Johann August Eberhard (1784).

[85] Ibid. iii.

[86] Ibid. 1.

[87] Ibid. 1.

offer an excellent summation of how he re-conceives the function of "supernatural" stories within his Enlightenment project; in his "Nachwort," he advocates such stories' usefulness in inoculating the reader against superstition. Citing Lessing's remarks on superstition in the theater, Eberhard notes that theatrical productions offer their audience members persistent reminders of the fictional nature of the drama that unfolds before them. He contrasts this with real life scenarios, within which it may be more difficult to sustain disbelief in the supernatural or recognize a deception of the senses when it occurs. Eberhard endorses Klaeden's book, as well as Hennings' two books on the explained supernatural, claiming that they allow readers to practice upholding sensible, enlightened perspectives in the face of the ostensibly supernatural.

During the later Enlightenment, as discussed earlier, encounters with ostensibly supernatural phenomena invoked tension within the beholding subject, who simultaneously experienced affective fear and intellectual disbelief; if Eberhard and others advocate resolving the tension of such experiences by purging oneself of superstition and adopting Enlightened methods of inquiry, then literature invoking the same tensions provides necessary training in the navigation of suspense. Understanding literature becomes a rehearsal for understanding life. Eberhard recognized that supernatural stories could evoke cognitive suspense for readers and model the resolution of that suspense through careful inquiry and revelation of the material causes behind frightening illusions. The potential excitement of this reading experience was viewed as an added bonus. By first presenting an ostensibly supernatural phenomenon, Enlightenment writers were able to engage a superstitious audience that could then, at least theoretically, be reeducated and persuaded to see things differently. It was perhaps no accident that the very first article to appear in the first issue of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* addressed the infamous *Weiße Frau*. As Eberhard writes, "das Märchen von der weißen Frau ist zu bekannt, als

daß ich nöthig hätte es weitläufig zu erzählen" (Eberhard 5). This statement reveals two significant implications of Eberhard's piece. First, it implies a populist interest in the article, acknowledging that readers may take an interest precisely because the story is so well known. It also tacitly acknowledges the preponderance of empirical evidence, in the form of eyewitness accounts and other texts, supporting the ghost's existence. It is both strategic and ambitious to write an article attempting to debunk a ghost that everybody both knows and has significant reason to believe in.

In explaining the methodology he will employ to reconsider the myth of the *Weiße Frau*, Eberhard aligns himself with a technique that has "schon mehrmal sein Glück gehabt" (Eberhard 3). He describes this technique as one that reexamines the "Ursprunge" of the story to show that these origins are by no means supernatural; in the examples that he offers of similar undertakings, it becomes clear that his reinterpretation is based on a re-alignment of signifying chains (Eberhard 3). Training the reader to recognize the unreality of the supernatural outside the bounds of the theater—where it is easier to remember the presence of the mechanisms that produce the effects—Eberhard deems it necessary to invoke the apparently supernatural apparition. Once the ghost has been presented, he can then show that the superstitions surrounding the *Weiße Frau* developed from misinterpretations of old texts. This process of investigation breaks certain signifying chains, whereby the perception of an apparition validates the reality of a spirit realm; it redraws the interpretive lines so that they bind superstition and supernatural perceptions to a closed linguistic and textual reality. In effect, this takes a ghost that purportedly belongs to an extra-textual reality and confines it to a textual reality, making it more like a theatrical ghost—one that is produced by identifiable processes, or by a turn of phrase, incorrectly interpreted.

Eberhard begins his investigation by presenting the *Weiße Frau* to his readers; though the story is quite famous, he takes the time to recounts its basic details. He relates the legend as follows: that at certain courts, the spectral figure of a woman dressed in white will appear when the death of some significant person at that court is imminent (see Eberhard 5). Eberhard then asserts that no historical evidence has shown an actual correspondence between the appearance of the woman and someone's death; we might expect that this fact, evidently based in observation, would be enough to discount the legend, but Eberhard is interested in invalidating the story on another level. He pursues the specifics of the tradition, which has gone so far as to produce "einen so vollständigen Roman über diese prophetische Erscheinung […], daß man die Zeit, wenn sie gelebt, ihr Geschlecht, ihren Namen, und ihre ganze Geschichte anzugeben und zu erzählen weiß" (Eberhard 6). Here, Eberhard relates the accepted understanding of the ghost, which sounds very similar to the story related by Graben zum Stein: the *Weiße Frau* is the ghost of Perchta, the Gräfin von Rosenberg, and the misfortunes of her life—the deaths of her husband and brother—compel her to warn others of impending tragedy even after her own death.

Recounting this accepted interpretation of the *Weiße Frau* is integral to Eberhard's argument, as it establishes a set of signifying links—connecting the ghost with a particular historical individual and with the possibility of imminent death—which he will dismantle later in his argument. The meaning that this story has accrued is in obvious conflict with Enlightenment assumptions; it was considered superstitious and outdated to believe that a particular woman could persist after her death as a spectral image and have foreknowledge of a living man's death. Eberhard does not choose to debunk the *Weiße Frau* through a simple rejection of these beliefs; he does not make the argument that there is no actual correspondence between her reported appearances and what she supposedly signifies. Instead, he revisits the initial signification of the

term *Weiße Frau* to demonstrate that it did not refer to a specific person's ghost, but described the cultural practice of a woman (or women) in mourning.

Eberhard attributes an alternate significance to the term "*Weiße Frau*" by connecting it with traditions for the honoring of the dead. "Die Geschichte sagt uns, daß in den mittlern Zeiten die Trauer einer Fürstin und Königin um ihren vorstorbenen Gemahl in einer weißen Tracht bestand," he notes; this admits that there is a historical justification for connecting a woman wearing white to the death of a significant male person at the court (Eberhard 12-13). He goes on to explain that it was not uncommon for these mourning women to be referred to as "weiße Frauen" or "weiße Königinnen," and suggests that the idea of a ghostly "weiße Frau" who can predict the death of a prince might, in fact, be the perversion of an old idiom. Saying "die weiße Frau wird bald am Hofe erscheinen" meant that the prince or king had a fatal ailment and there would soon be a widow at court (Eberhard 16). Eberhard analyzes the possible implications of misinterpreting this expression; if one were to confuse the cause and effect of this statement, the appearance of the *Weiße Frau* might be understood as a portent of death and not the result of a death that has already occurred.

Eberhard's analysis breaks the link between the *Weiße Frau* and a specific historical personage; the apparition becomes a projection resulting from a misinterpretation of an identifiable, historical practice. If it truly resulted from the confusion of cause and effect implicit in a common idiom, this ghost may have been conjured by nothing more sinister than grammar; the implicit subjunctive of the German future tense suggested a spectral apparition that portended death, rather than signifying it in the aftermath. Eberhard's argument does not attempt to contradict the eyewitness accounts of those who claim to have seen the *Weiße Frau*. By never questioning the empirical evidence itself, Eberhard implies that a superstitious mindset precedes

the perception of supernatural phenomena. In his account, the misinterpretation of a cultural practice and a common phrase produces the perception of the supernatural phenomenon, which is not understood as the persistence of a particular soul, but as the projection of superstitious fancy.

Suspense plays a substantively different role here than it did in the *Unterredungen*; rather than establishing the conditions for a ghost's existence, suspense describes the internal state of an Enlightenment subject presented with an ostensible apparition. Enlightenment ideology renounces the possibility of such apparitions, but the persistence of old superstitions allows supernatural phenomena to evoke an affective fear-response, even in a subject whose intellect dismisses their legitimacy. To cope with this problem—the suspense produced by the tension of affect and intellect—Eberhard adapts ghost stories to his Enlightenment pedagogy, employing them as practice and training in the proper exercise of a reasonable response to ghosts. Not all of Eberhard's contemporaries felt as convinced of the potential usefulness of ghost stories; nor did they all agree with the Enlightenment methods and ideals forwarded by people like Eberhard and Hennings. The young Jean Paul, who began writing during the 1780's when the Berlin Enlightenment (of which Eberhard was a part) was experiencing a bit of a crisis in the wake of the *Empfindsamkeit* movement, evidently did not think much of deploying the supernatural as a catalyst of reason within non-fiction. In "Nachdenklicher aber wahrer Bericht von einer höchst merkwürdigen Erscheinung der weißen Frau und von den Ursachen, warum sie in der Erde gar nicht ruhen kan," he offers his own revision of the *weiße Frau* story, and while he ultimately critiques superstition and upholds Enlightenment values, he does so through narrative satire rather than analytical discourse.

Though each retelling of the *Weiße Frau* featured in this chapter repurposes the story in a distinct way, certain fundamental elements remain the same. Whether presented as reality or

illusion, the ghost's appearance catalyzes a purgation of negative attributes within the beholder. In the *Unterredungen,* Pneumatophilus claims that she has allowed at least one man to purge himself of sin and ensure his ascent to Heaven after death. Eberhard reexamines the classic tale in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* so that readers may purge themselves of misguided superstitions and rise to new levels of Enlightenment. In satirical style, Jean Paul's *Weiße Frau* incites both figurative and literal purgation; even as the spirit calls for idealistic societal transformations, she also brings on a fatal bout of diarrhea for the text's constipated narrator. The idiosyncrasy of Jean Paul's "Bericht*"* simultaneously resists comparison with other iterations of the *Weiße Frau* and invites it by inverting or revising the traditional story.

Jean Paul revives the *Weiße Frau* tradition, not as a means of evaluating the ontological reality of ghosts, but as a set of formal conventions within a text that is self-consciously fictional. Moving away from the ontological questions surrounding ghosts, he builds satire by employing the "narrative" tropes of an encounter with the *Weiße Frau.* Engaging with this famous ghost as a fictional "character" allows Jean Paul to represent her in a more idiosyncratic manner; though he grants the character an authoritative voice within the story, he also undermines her as a potential delusion resulting from poor digestion. This *Weiße Frau* represents seemingly incongruous values; as a ghost, she embodies superstition, though she articulates Enlightenment ideologies. Such contradiction and paradox, used here for satiric effect, distinguishes Jean Paul's rendition of the *Weiße Frau* from those analyzed earlier. Though used here in a fictional context, and not in service of a philosophical text, the appearance of the ghost in this report still contributes to thought and cognitive activity, albeit in a different way.

Jean Paul's Report on an Encounter with the *Weiße Frau*

The "Nachdenklicher aber wahrer Bericht von einer höchst merkwürdigen Erscheinung der weißen Frau und von den Ursachen, warum sie in der Erde gar nicht ruhen kan" is a short and certainly minor satirical essay from 1783/1784, written before Jean Paul became the innovative narrative author of novels and stories such as *Leben des vergnügten Schulmeisterlein Maria Wutz in Auenthal, Hesperus oder 45 Hundposttage, Siebenkäs,* and *Titan*. According to his autobiographical accounts, Jean Paul turned to narrative fiction because of a vision he had on the night of November 15, 1790—a premonition of his own death in which he foresaw himself as a corpse.[88] All of his major works of fiction were written in the decades following this momentous evening, and perhaps because of this event, an awareness of mortality is present in all of them. Paul Fleming provocatively asserts that "Jean Paul's characters tend to 'kill' themselves from the get go and then keep on living."[89] Gustav, for instance, the hero of Jean Paul's first novel, *Die Unsichtbare Loge,* is raised underground in a cave for the first eight years of his life by a teacher known only as the *Genius;* when Gustav's early education is complete, the *Genius* stages a "death" for Gustav, bringing him to the surface to begin the rest of his life. Fleming sees this embrace of mortality as central to Jean Paul's humor; his emphasis on impermanence helps to ironically undercut his characters' confidence in their own importance or in the importance of their endeavors.[90] The impact of Jean Paul's vision could also be read as

[88] Cf. Paul Fleming, *The Pleasures of Abandonment: Jean Paul and the Life of Humor* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2006): 28; and Jean Paul. *Ideen-Gewimmel. Text und Aufzeichnungen aus dem unveröfftenlichten Nachlaß*, edited by Kurl Wölfel and Thomas Birtz (Frankfurt: Eichborn, 1996): 236.

[89] Ibid. 27.

[90] Cf. Fleming 21-15.

affirmation of Julian Wolfrey's assertion (building off of Derrida) that ghost stories are at the heart of all fiction;[91] Jean Paul began writing fiction after experiencing a ghostly vision and, by Fleming's account, his characters begin their fictional lives as ghosts.

It lies beyond the scope of this project to consider how this reading implies an inherently spectral quality in all of Jean Paul's fiction, but his short piece on the *Weiße Frau* still exhibits much of the humor, playfulness and idiosyncrasy that characterizes his later work. Though the "Bericht" was written in 1787, three years before Jean Paul's vision and subsequent commitment to fiction, this satire treats the *Weiße Frau* as a fictional figure. The text assumes two contradictory positions. On the one hand, its presentation of a ghost goes against Enlightenment thinkers like Hennings, Nicolai and Eberhard who try to discredit the ontological reality of spirits. On the other hand, it espouses the Enlightenment values of justice and equality, using the portentous *Weiße Frau* as a mouthpiece for them. Although scholars have debated the aesthetic orientation and political leanings[92] of Jean Paul's work, this satirical piece on the *Weiße Frau* has a clear revolutionary bent. By treating the famous ghost of the *Weiße Frau* as a literary figure and demonstrating no interest in considering its ontological reality, Jean Paul is able to expand

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[91] Julian Wolfrey, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002): 1-3.

[92] Heinrich Heine may have been one of the earliest to recognize Jean Paul's unique place in literary history in the late eighteenth / early nineteenth century: he did not belong to the Romantic School, nor did he participate in the aesthetics of Classicism. In his seminal study on Jean from the first half of the twentieth century, Max Kommerell suggests that Jean Paul was the first modern writer, restating the coming observation that he was years and years ahead of his time. Cf. Heinrich Heine. *Die Romantische Schule* in *Sämtliche Schriften. Band 5. 1831-1837*, edited by Klaus Briegleb (München: Hanser, 1976): 357-504; Max Kommerell, *Jean Paul. 3. Auflage* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1957); Fleming 12-16. Georg Lukaçs felt that Jean Paul's work tacitly reconciled to the negative aspects of a petit bourgeois existence, whereas Wolfgang Harich recognized a strong revolutionary bent in all of his writing; cf. Wolfgang Harich, *Jean Pauls Revolutionsdichtung. Versuch einer neuen Deutung seine heroischen Romane* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rohwohlt, 1974).

and redefine the ghost's role within narrative; in attributing his revolutionary message to the apparition, he subverts his audience's expectations about what its appearance signifies.

Jean Paul began to write his satirical essays when he went to the University of Leipzig in 1781, at a time when the *Berlinische Aufklärung* began to face criticism for maintaining its hold on rationalist positions that were considered outmoded and old-fashioned.[93] Scholars reflecting on the beginning of Jean Paul's writing career see him internalizing the conflicting positions of sentimentalism and rationalism as he struggled to find his place as a writer. [94] He eventually cultivated a sharp and biting satirical voice, inspired by such authors as Horace, Voltaire and Erasmus. These satirical essays on all manner of topics became some of his first publications, written under the pen name J. P. F. Hasus and collected in the horribly unsuccessful volumes *Gronländische Prozesse* (1783) and the *Auswahl aus des Teufels Papieren* (1787). Barely read at the time, these satirical essays, of which the "Bericht" is one, have also attracted only minimal scholarly attention. Generally, they are understood as the failed beginnings of a writer who came into his own in the following decade. Although reading a single piece of these satirical writing will not alter the marginalized status of these early texts among scholars, the "Bericht" contributes notably to this dissertation because it engages with the narrative tradition of the *Weiße Frau* and also reacts to the type of Enlightenment attitudes found in Eberhard's article on the famous ghost.

The "Bericht" first addresses this Enlightenment tradition through an early mention of "H. Prof. Hennings," that "bekante Erbfeind der Gespenter" (*SW* II:1 1008). The narrator gives

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[93] Cf. Kosenina, Alexander, "Einführung" in *Berliner Aufklärung: kulturwissenschaftliche Studien*, edited by Ursula Goldenbaum and Alexander Kosenina (Hannover: Wehrhann Verlag =, 1999): 7-9.

[94] Cf. Jean Paul, *Jean Paul: A Reader*, edited and with an introduction and commentary by Timothy J. Casey; translations by Erika Casey (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992): 10.

Hennings the title "archenemy of the ghosts" because of his two famous books arguing against belief in them, *Von Ahndungen und Visionen* and *Von Geistern und Geistersehen*. The narrator has kind words for Hennings, but his remarks are laced with irony. Hennings is "unter unsern besten Philosophen," and also a man who has "bestreitet […] das Dasein der Gespenster mit eben so viel Geschicklichkeit als meine Grosmutter es sonst verfocht" (*SW* II.1: 1008). There is irony in the narrator's choice to praise Hennings as one of "our best philosophers" while rating his cleverness against that of his own grandmother. One accolade implies Hennings' importance within the nation or the world and suggests the narrator's authority in pronouncing this judgment; the second—in identifying the narrator's grandmother as his barometer of intelligence—indicates that the narrator has a radically limited frame of reference. The narrator either intentionally undermines Hennings' importance with sarcasm, purposefully demoting him to his grandmother's level, or he unintentionally undermines him and simultaneously reveals his own lack of sophistication through inadvertent self-satire. The narrator goes on to report with "keine Schande" that Hennings has thoroughly convinced him not to believe in ghosts (*SW* II:1:1008). The additional remark that there is "no shame" in being convinced by Hennings again exhibits ironic contradiction—if Hennings was truly a great philosopher, why would the narrator need to defend or excuse his having been influenced? The narrator's remark simultaneously plants the possibility that there might be shame in following Hennings' teachings and suggests something specifically shameful about the way the narrator, himself, has assumed Hennings' views. Hennings argument has evidently pushed the narrator towards a radical atheistic perspective, which critics of the Enlightenment often identified as a risk of championing Reason. For two weeks, the narrator believed in neither ghosts nor God, "dann beides ist im Grunde wol

nicht weit aus einander" (*SW* II:1 1008). Hennings has convinced him not to believe in ghosts, and the narrator perceives no great difference between ghosts and God.

Having satirically invoked the Enlightenment tradition epitomized by Hennings, Jean Paul proceeds to further subvert expectations as the narrator reports on his encounter with the *Weiße Frau*. The narrator reports that, happily, he is no longer convinced by Hennings' argument. A recent incident has saved him from this "fürchterlichen Gespensterunglauben" (*SW* II:1 1008). The humor of these lines arises from the subversion of Enlightenment values evident in the narrator's reversal of the expected adjectives attached to reason and superstition. Here, it is the lack of belief in ghosts [*Gespensterunglauben*] that the narrator finds "frightful/terrible"—adjectives more commonly applied to superstitious notions by Enlightenment thinkers. The narrator's salvation [*Heilung*] comes when he is saved from this disbelief in ghosts; in other words, he is saved by becoming un-Enlightened. This account stands in humorous conflict with the Enlightenment's contention that reason saves one from the kind of frightful superstitions propagated by "alten Damen" at "ordentlichen wöchentliche Zusammenkünfte." The narrator's return to a superstition, however, provides him with comfort and healing. Though Jean Paul subverts Enlightenment attitudes, he does so with a satiric tone. Ultimately this technique ridicules the narrator himself more than it genuinely critiques Enlightenment values.

The encounter with the *Weiße Frau* rescues the narrator from a "terrible" state of disbelief; though the narrator attributes positive value to this reversion, Jean Paul satirizes the narrator's superstitious mindset. The narrator's behavior is here depicted as comically inexplicable—the actions he readily admits to performing are either entirely inane or simply absurd, especially to the uninitiated observer. But the narrator recounts them proudly, as though they were only the most ordinary actions in the world. His story proceeds as follows: on a

Sunday morning, he goes to church as usual but arrives before the start of the morning service. Bored, he decides to pass the time by counting organ pipes until he is interrupted by a sound and turns to find himself face-to-face with "eine von Fuss bis auf den Kopf in feinen weissen Atlas gekleidete Frau" (*SW* II:1 1009). Without explanation or justification, the narrator quickly undertakes a few mystical maneuvers, tracing a circle around himself on the ground with his walking stick and reciting some words from a couple of alchemical books that he evidently happens to keep in his bag: "aus der ersten las ich 9 Worte leise, aus der andern 63 vernehmlich" (*SW* II:1 1010). The whole setup is rather absurd, and it seems entirely unlikely that the reader is meant to find it sympathetic or admirable. Irony builds when the narrator boasts of maintaining a sense of "Besonnenheit," despite his fear (*SW* II:1 1009). Truly, the narrator's ignorance becomes the object of Jean Paul's satire as he congratulates himself for having performed these superstitious rituals with honor: "und mich dünkt, macht mir dieses Betragen wahre Ehre" (*SW* II:1 1009). The narrator's easy equation of honor and superstition produces humorous tension for the reader who finds these terms mismatched. The narrator's perspectives thoroughly subvert conventional Enlightenment valuations—disbelief in ghosts is frightening (and possibly shameful); superstition is healing and honorable.

Though the "Bericht" contains many subversive elements, the narrator conforms to convention as he begins to question the ghost, emphasizing the same inquiry that proved central to other interpretations of the *Weiße Frau* story: why has this spirit appeared? The ghost's answers subvert the audience's expectations of the *Weiße Frau*'s objectives, but the general structure of the encounter is consistent with other iterations of the story. As with the *Unterredungen* and Eberhard's reassessment of the tale, this text develops through an interrogation of the underlying cause of the apparition. The narrator of the "Bericht" is not

interested in seeking a material cause—the ontological reality of what he sees is not called into question—but he does want to know why this ghost is not able to enjoy the restful peace of death. This leads into the main body of the text, which consists of a short series of exchanges in which the *Weiße Frau* lists her complaints and the narrator responds.

Jean Paul's version of the *Weiße Frau* is unique in that she justifies her own existence and does not attribute it to the errors or traumas of her past. Instead, she expresses complaints about current conditions in the surrounding world and demands forward-looking change. She begins with the following assertion: "Ich kan nicht ruhen und werde nicht ruhen bis die Predigten daselbst etwas besseres hervorbringen als Schlaf" (*SW* II:1 1010). Rather than haunting the narrator because of an old grievance, she haunts him to express dissatisfaction with church pastors and the ways they deliver their Sunday messages in the present. She does not like that they are so boring that they put everyone to sleep. Each of her demands critiques the contemporary world: she attacks pastors who claim to be receiving the words of their sermons through divine inspiration, rails against the attempts made by people of all religions to convert others to their faith, decries the apparent bloodlust of the justice system and finds fault with a system of aristocracy that attaches nobility to a piece of paper [*Adelsbrief*] rather than to nobility of soul. The narrator attempts to contradict each of her demands as best he can. When she demands that pastors do something other than just put their parishioners to sleep, the narrator responds that she is thinking about it all wrong. "Iede Kirche ist eine geistliches Krankenhaus," (*SW* II:1 1010) he remarks—what could be better than sleep for those who are ill? He claims to have gone to church with many a "Sele, die an Gewissensbissen siechte und ganz mat darniederlag," (*SW* II:1 1010) only to have them emerge "frisch und munter wie mein Pudel" (*SW* II:1 1010-1011) after a healthy sleep during the sermon.

Over the course of this debate, the narrator appears dim-witted and backwards when compared to the ghost, who consistently expresses progressive values. Though Jean Paul turns a satiric eye towards both the Enlightenment and superstition, it becomes increasingly clear that the narrator is the true target of the text's critique. Jean Paul may have written this narrator, but he clearly does not identify with the man's voice. The narrator even expresses contempt for the profession that Jean Paul aspires to practice: "sie [thun] nach meiner Einsicht gar nicht Unrecht, wenn sie über alle Satiren den Stab brechen" (*SW* II:1 1012). On a meta-textual level, this narrator does not even know how to look out for his own well-being—if all satirists were put to death, including Jean Paul, this narrator would not exist, for there would be no one to write him. His reflections about the rights of the aristocracy reflect a similarly foolish disregard for the realities of his existence. The *Weiße Frau* expresses her dismay that the aristocratic class is treated so well simply because they possess a piece of paper—an *Adelsbrief*—that says they are noble. Although the narrator is not a nobleman, he argues in favor of the rights of the aristocracy. He argues that it is perfectly justified for the aristocracy to be treated differently than every other person; they should be afforded special privileges and enjoy all of the assurance and comfort that life can offer them, thanks to their connection with that noble *Stammbaum*. This attitude seems primarily motivated by hypothetical self-interest: if he were a nobleman, and if he had children, he would say to them: "Ich wünschte wol, ich könt' euch unsern Adelsbrief an den Hals hängen" (*SW* II:1 1016).

Within the context of these exchanges, the narrator associates himself with decidedly *un*-Enlightened values. Instead of religious tolerance, the narrator advocates religious competition; instead of equality, he advocates for the rights of the aristocracy. Advocacy for these progressive values comes from a ghost—a supernatural entity that most progressive Enlightenment thinkers

would categorically reject. Jean Paul seems to recognize that, traditionally, the *Weiße Frau* carries some authority as a harbinger of death. Though the revolutionary and progressive values of his text align more closely with the Enlightenment, Jean Paul borrows this old notion of the ghost's authority to give weight to the innovative ideas she expresses in opposition to the foolish narrator. This choice capitalizes on the unique possibilities of self-conscious fiction, which permits the paradox of having a ghost articulate Enlightenment values. The reference to Hennings at the opening of the text reminds the reader of his rejection of superstition and the supernatural within the context of an Enlightenment philosophy. Jean Paul's creative satire, however, finds a new role for the *Weiße Frau* within Enlightenment discourse. As we have seen, this overturns readers' expectations and generates contradiction: Enlightenment values are expressed by a supernatural entity, and that entity argues against a thoroughly un-Enlightened (former) devotee of Hennings.

It is distinctive and significant that Jean Paul's *Weiße Frau* does not contribute to debates about the ontological reality of ghosts. The earlier sections of this chapter demonstrate how the *Weiße Frau* story has been evoked for that purpose. The early mention of Hennings' arguments against ghosts generates an expectation that the "Bericht" will engage such philosophical and ontological questions; the narrator initially praises Hennings, then rejects his "frightful" disbelief in ghosts. Ultimately, the text abandons these concerns and adapts the *Weiße Frau* to an entirely different purpose. Jean Paul uses the *Weiße Frau* as a literary figure, relies on his audience's familiarity with the legend, and plays against their expectations throughout his satirical piece. In the traditional legend, the appearance of the *Weiße Frau* prophesied death for a male member of the household. Readers' knowledge of this traditional function of the ghost becomes important as the text moves towards its resolution, for in the somewhat surprising conclusion of the "Bericht,"

the narrator dies. Evidently, the appearance of this *Weiße Frau* still prophesies a demise, though not the one that the reader might have expected.

The "Bericht" ends on a darkly humorous and unsettling note when the narrator's health takes a rapid and irreversible turn for the worst. Shortly after the *Weiße Frau* vanishes, the narrator loses consciousness and has to be carried from the church. He announces to the reader that "weder meine Erben noch mein Doktor" have much hope for his recovery. Though the *Weiße Frau* typically appears before family members of the ill-fated person, here she presents herself to the narrator and himself, in part to predict his own demise. This attributes a dark and mysterious power to the ghost, but with characteristic irony, the text undermines her mystery and even calls the narrator's perception of her into question when it reveals the nature of his fatal ailment. Though it is unclear why he will not recover—the experience apparently overwhelmed him—he does divulge that for three days prior to this encounter in the church, he had been severely constipated. Following his conversation with the spirit, he suffered a bout of intense diarrhea: "[die weiße Frau] hob sonach meine Verstopfung und meinen Gespensterunglauben auf einmal" (*SW* II:1 1017). Despite the diarrhea, he continues to gain weight and not to lose it. His doctors find this troubling and take it as indication that the end is fast approaching.

The narrator's ailment is some sort of intestinal trouble, and it is a problem of excess. In constipation, his body retains waste, essentially hoarding it for an unhealthy length of time; the debate with the *Weiße Frau* precipitates the release of that waste in a similarly unhealthy, excessive manner. The result of this release is an increase in weight and an indication of unending, unstoppable excess. Grumblings about the excesses of the aristocracy—exemplified particularly in the infamous Diamond Necklace Affair, which occurred around the time that the "Bericht" was published—were rampant during the 1780's. In crude, scatological fashion, the

narrator's bodily ailments at the end of this text can be read as allegorical representations of that excess. The narrator's intestinal ailment also links the "Bericht" to a popular belief in the late 18th century that people suffered ghostly visions as a result of digestive discomfort. In his conversation with the *Weiße Frau*, the narrator even references this idea, remarking that when people claim to be receiving inspiration from above, they may, in fact, be receiving "inspiration" from below—that is to say, from their lower body ("aus dem Unterleibe").[95] Our po or, constipated narrator may be suffering from such delusions when he sees the *Weiße Frau*.

Regardless of whether the narrator's ghostly vision results from indigestion, the figure of the *Weiße Frau* serves a portentous function. A subtle detail in the text identifies her with alarm and warning, right before she appears. Preceding her entrance, the narrator is engaged in the seemingly pointless activity of counting organ pipes; the *Weiße Frau* appears, as if on cue, when he reaches "den Schnarpfeifen, die ich eben zum zweitenmale überzählte" (*SW* II:1 1009). This "Schnarpfeife" is a shrill, buzzing alarm-like pipe. The "schnarren" in the name anticipates the ghost's function in the text: she, too, is an alarm—a wake-up call. She warns the narrator that, until her demands are met, she cannot rest and will not rest. She will continue to appear, bringing death. When the narrator announces his own approaching doom to the reader, he concludes with a reluctant warning:

[95] This humorous way of understanding ghosts dates at least to the seventeenth century, when Samuel Butler wrote the following lines as part of his comedic epic *Hudibras:* "As wind in hypochondria pent / Is but a fast, if downward sent; / But if suppressed, it upwards flies / And vents itself in Prophecies." Kant refers to this line from Butler in the *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*, and it may eventually have been what also inspired Scrooge's famous remark to Marlowe's ghosts in *A Christmas Carol*: "A slight disorder of the stomach makes [the senses] cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!

> so geh' ich, sobald ich tod bin, ebenfalls herum und zwar vielleicht in Geselschaft der weissen Frau. Ich werde sie dan am rechten Arme führen und auch als Gespenst so gehen wie ich Zeit meines ganzen Lebens gieng—nämlich ohne Kopf. (*SW* II:1 1017-1018)

This final assertion—that he will walk without a head in death, as he did in life—is a darkly humorous self-indictment; he acknowledges his own stupidity by metaphorically admitting his own failure to engage his mind during the course of his life. It is also a stunningly prescient vision of the French Revolution and the terrors of the guillotine, since it suggests the possibility of beheading.

Such an ending—darkly satirical and metaphorically layered—is uniquely possible in a text that embraces fiction as its discursive mode. Though Jean Paul's *Weiße Frau* does not seek recrimination for past grievances, the reader's awareness that a ghost's suspension between life and the afterlife is traditionally linked to unresolved sins and traumas offers insight into the narrator's concluding remarks; he seems to suggest that he, too, may become a ghost, perhaps due to poor choices he made in his life and to foolish perspectives he supported. If, after death, he must atone for the sins of his incarnation, then he will be atoning for the intellectual failures he acknowledges at the end of the "Bericht." There's a humorous irony in entertaining the notion that though he failed as an Enlightenment subject in life, he may yet succeed in adopting this philosophy—including its disavowal of ghosts—after death.

It is important to reiterate, however, that though the "Bericht" contains many references to eighteenth-century debates about the ontological reality of ghosts, it does not ultimately argue for or against their existence. Jean Paul capitalizes on his audience's awareness of the famous legend to develop a satirical essay that critiques the current conditions of politics and society in a revolutionary manner. The apparition serves as a warning, a herald of death and future danger, and not as an indicator of past errors and unfinished business. Though presented in a fictional

context, these warnings are relevant and significant for Jean Paul's contemporary audience. The ghost can represent these ideas in the text regardless of its extra-textual reality or lack thereof. Jean Paul departs from Enlightenment convention by reinventing the *Weiße Frau* as a self-consciously fictional figure, but crafts his satire in a way that nevertheless resonates with the progressive ideals of his day and allows his version of the story to stimulate reflection and cognitive activity.

Conclusion

By analyzing these iterations of the story of the *Weiße Frau*, we can observe that the discourse on ghosts and ghost stories took various forms throughout the eighteenth century. The *Unterredungen aus dem Reiche der Geister* records a version of the legend that originated during a more superstitious age and was popularized within the oral storytelling tradition. Reviving this older tradition in the eighteenth century, the *Unterredungen* uses it in an attempt to confirm the reality of spirits. Though the *Unterredungen* presents invented dialogues between fictional personas, it clearly engages in the growing philosophical debate regarding the ontological reality of ghosts. Eberhard's article on the *Weiße Frau* in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* explicitly contributes to this philosophical tradition; he offers material and rational explanations for the appearance of the *Weiße Frau* in an effort to demonstrate the prowess of reason and disabuse his readers of their outmoded superstition. To accomplish this, he still "conjures" the ghost textually and hopes to takes advantage of the reader's resultant experience of intellectual suspense. The ghost's appearance raises questions and suspends the reader's preconceptions; he theorizes that this suspense activates reason, which then elucidates, demystifies and yields new knowledge. Rather than directly engaging these philosophical discourses, Jean Paul's "Bericht" repurposes

the widely-known details of the *Weiße Frau* story to deliver societal critique through a fictive satire. As a literary figure, the attributes of Jean Paul's *Weiße Frau* both resonate with and contradict her attributes in the widely-known legend, suspending and subverting the readers' expectations as the narrative unfolds.

The following chapters examine texts from the second half of the eighteenth century that engage the discourse on ghosts in varying ways. Many of them, like Jean Paul's "Bericht," take up a fictional approach, exploring various themes and concerns that relate to ghosts but do not directly engage the ontological question of their existence. In his pre-critical text *Träume eines Geistersehers*, however, Immanuel Kant directly addresses the ontological debate. At the conclusion of the *Träume*, Kant asserts that ghosts are unsuitable for philosophical consideration; they can only be considered in a subjective or fictional context. This clear division relegates the ghost to fiction and discourages further consideration of the ghost's ontological reality in philosophy, but the *Träume* itself relies on the interaction of these incompatibles. As the argument develops, ghosts figure prominently as fictive elements that catalyze Kant's philosophical articulations. Despite Kant's dissociation of ghosts and philosophy, the two intermingle in the *Träume* in a productive way. In the following chapter, I will analyze the structure of Kant's argument and demonstrate that it closely resembles that of a ghost story.

CHAPTER TWO:
ON THE USEFULNESS OF GHOSTS:
IMMANUEL KANT'S *TRÄUME EINES GEISTERSEHERS*

From reading the three famous *Critiques* of the 1780's and '90's, one might think of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) as a strictly philosophical writer, but his works from the decade immediately prior to the Inaugural Dissertation of 1770,[96] including the challenging and sarcastic essay *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (1766), [97]show him departing from this stereotype in both content and style. Though Kant remained firmly committed to the normalcy of his everyday routine in the small town of Königsberg during the 1760's, marvelous circumstances seemed determined to intrude upon his life. First, a man and his eight-year old son emerged from the nearby woods, having spent the majority of their lives removed from human society altogether. Intrigued, Kant visited this so-called "goat prophet," and eventually wrote an essay on mental illness inspired by the experience.[98] Meanwhile, he exchanged letters with Charlotte von Knoblauch about Emanuel Swedenborg, a

[96] *De Anima Mundi*. After writing this Inaugural Dissertation, Kant all but stopped producing written work until the publication of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* [*Kritik der reinenen Vernunft*] in 1781. Many scholars, however, recognize the clear beginning of Kant's critical philosophy in the Inaugural Dissertation, even if it took another 11 years before he began to articular it more fully. They therefore mark the turning point of Kant's career at 1770, the year when *De Anima Mundi* appeared.

[97] All page numbers refer to the following volume and will be henceforth cited in parentheses according to the following format (*TG* [page #]): Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 2, ed. Berlin Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, G. Reimer, 1912): 2:315-373.

[98] Immanuel Kant, "Versuch über die Krankheiten des Kopfes," in *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Berlin Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, G. Reimer, 1912): 2:257-273.

scientist/philosopher turned mystic/theologian who caused a stir throughout Europe with several displays of esoteric psychic prowess. Charlotte wanted to know Kant's opinion of the matter, which inspired him to anonymously publish the essay *Träume eines Geistersehers* at the end of 1766. The humorous, witty and ironic tone of the essay is, for Kant, as unconventional as its esoteric themes, making the text quite confusing for his readers. Moses Mendelssohn, in his review from 1767, famously quipped that it is unclear whether Kant intended to discredit metaphysics or support spirit-seeing; scholarship on the *Träume* has also been largely dedicated to a fierce debate of these two possibilities.

Though most discussions of the *Träume* have centered on attempts to unpack the seemingly contradictory nature of the text's philosophical arguments, considering the unusual form and style of the text offers an alternative means of approaching it. Karl Vorländer has rightly asserted that "Man würde indes die *Träume* nur halb kennen, wenn man bloß ihren philosophischen Gedankengang im Kopfe hat."[99] Citing "die Mischung von behaglicher Ironie, keckem Witz und heiterer, ja übermütiger Laune," Vorländer seems convinced that, in the case of this text, the meaning emerges by engaging in the process of reading, and not merely by grasping its content.[100] Building on Vorländer's arguments about the importance of *how* Kant writes, my reading explores how Kant uses the textual figure of the ghost within the *Träume*. The question to ask of this text is not whether ghosts are real, but rather how Kant employs a ghostly figure to focus and build his philosophical argument. It seems clear that Kant is not particularly invested in the possible ontological reality of the spirit world; indeed, he articulates a decidedly

[99] Karl Vorländer, *Immanuel Kant, Der Mann und Das Werk* (Leipzig: F. Meiner, 1924): 1:167.

[100] The distinction is made between *kennen* and *empfinden* – you come to know [*kennen*] the text only halfway by learning its content, but you really feel your way into the text [*empfinden*], which is to say, you are drawn into it through your subjectivity as well, when you read it for yourself (Vorländer 1:167).

negative view of Swedenborg's spirit-seeing. He does, however, choose to temporarily suspend that judgment, and his choice allows the ghost to appear within the text. The ghost is not a being with extra-textual existence, but a semiotic figure whose textual appearance has a particular function. In this case, the ghost becomes a signifier for the theories of eighteenth century speculative metaphysics—Kant defines it using that specific philosophical discourse. When the *Träume* later articulates the absurdity of ghosts and spirit-seeing, it thus attacks speculative metaphysics by association; the process by which the text unfolds—the suspension of judgment, the appearance of the ghost and its subsequent dismissal—is crucial, because it allows Kant to establish the association between spirit-seeing and speculative metaphysics. As Sarah Porciau and Liliane Weissberg have noted, the *Träume* works a bit more as a piece of literature than as a philosophical doctrine.[101] Specifically, I argue that it works as a philosophical ghost story, working towards its conclusion through an active process of conjuring and confronting an ostensibly supernatural phenomenon.

Though many scholars and critics consider the texts of Kant's pre-Critical period less important than the later critiques, this confrontation with the supernatural in the *Träume* has significance in the history of late Enlightenment narrative and thought, as it both anticipates the literary principle of the "explained supernatural" and demonstrates how ghosts can serve a

[101] Sarah Pourciau aptly summarizes the predominant attitude towards this precarious boundary between literature and philosophy in the *Träume*: "the lesson [of a text that undertakes its project in this way], for the modern reader, tends to resolve itself with astonishing alacrity into the deconstructive truism that philosophy and literature remain ultimately indistinguishable. Even Kant cannot escape the implacable encroachment of *Erdichtung*." "Disarming the Double: Kant in Defense of Philosophy (1766)." *Germanic Review* 81, no. 2 (2006): 101. See also Liliane Weissberg, "Philosophie als Wahnsage, Kants *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*," in *Geistersprache: Philosophischer und Literarischer Diskurs Im Späten Achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1990); Willi Goetschel, *Constituting Critique: Kant's Writing ds Critical Praxis*, trans. Eric Schwab (Durham: Duke UP, 1994).

crucial regulative function in such texts. The "explained supernatural" in literature is most readily associated with Friedrich Schiller (*Der Geisterseher*, 1st book edition 1789) in Germany and with Ann Radcliffe (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794) in England.[102] Confrontations with supernatural phenomena occur in two parts within such stories—first, one is presented with something that would seem to defy explanation without recourse to the supernatural; then, the ostensibly supernatural event is shown to have a natural, material explanation. Suspense is thus a constitutive part of such stories; for the duration of the time between the supernatural event and its explanation, the "normal" assumptions that the hero can make about his/her world are not applicable—they are held in suspense. This chapter argues that the general impulse towards the explained supernatural significantly predated both Schiller and Radcliffe and developed as an outgrowth of late Enlightenment society's transition away from older beliefs. Within a context that increasingly placed its faith in reason and in natural scientific explanations, stories containing "superstitious" elements necessarily suspended assumptions about the parameters of reality; that suspense, in turn, demanded resolution in the form of a natural explanation. At the same time, this impulse towards the explained supernatural is not a simple rejection of traditionally-held beliefs that were considered outdated by the latter half of the eighteenth century. Numerous thinkers of the late Enlightenment actively employed the supernatural to stimulate and define their arguments about various aspects of culture and thought. Kant, for example, employs the supernatural as a sign in his attack on speculative metaphysics, which allows him to develop his perspectives on the capabilities and limits of reason. In other words,

[102] Patrick Bridgwater traces the origin of the "explained supernatural" further back than either Schiller or Radcliffe, but most importantly, he argues that these two writers developed this idea in literature without having any direct influence on one another. Cf. Patrick Bridgwater, *The German Gothic Novel in Anglo-German Perspective* (New York: Rodopi, 2013).

the confrontation with the supernatural in the *Träume* is crucial in the inception of Kant's critical philosophy.

Despite its reputation as a difficult text, the basic structure of the *Träume* can be easily parsed, particularly when one considers how its structure approximates that of an explained supernatural story. Kant divides the text into two parts; the first has four sub-sections, the second three.[103] The "Erste Theil, welche dogmatisch ist" undertakes a theoretical outline of how a ghost might present itself to a person's senses as though it were part of the material world of sensible objects (*K* 320-352). Though the challenging subsection I.2 (*K* 329-341) is perhaps the most debated part of the *Träume*, it figures prominently in my analysis, as it imparts Kant's meta-commentary on the way in which his own text is working. The "Zweite Theil, welcher historisch ist," addresses reports of Swedenborg's major psychic feats and provides a cursory summary of his 8-volume work, the *Arcana coelestia* (1749-1756) (*K* 353-373). Here, Kant makes clear that he does not think very highly of Swedenborg's claims and dismisses the whole idea that spirit-seeing is real or leads to meaningful knowledge. As in a story of the explained supernatural, the sequence of the two parts is crucial: Part One presents the supernatural as real, Part Two dismisses it as false. In order to entertain the possibility of the supernatural in Part One, Kant uses ideas and terminology drawn from the predominant schools of eighteenth-century metaphysics. Because of the sequence in which the text unfolds, his disavowal of the supernatural becomes also a disavowal of those dominant schools of philosophical thought.

By relying more on an examination of the text's structure than its philosophical arguments and identifying it as a philosophical ghost story, this reading of the *Träume* departs

[103] For ease, I will notate these sections with a Roman numeral for the main part, followed by a period and a cardinal number for the sub-section. For example, part 1, section 2 will be notated as I.2.

from some of the predominant trends in scholarship. Kant's interest in Swedenborg, which seemed at least briefly genuine, has inspired some to look for further evidence that Swedenborg's esotericism continued to impact Kant when he was writing his later philosophy, including the *Critiques*. Others oppose this Swedenborgian strain of Kant scholarship by reading the *Träume* as a clear disavowal of Swedenborg and as the pivotal moment when Kant moves towards the perspectives of his critical philosophy. For them, Swedenborg merely provides an occasion to negotiate a set of intellectual crises about speculative metaphysics that Kant already experienced. The confrontation with the supernatural tends to be deemphasized in such readings, and the *Träume* is still generally viewed as a minor work. Some background on the text's origin and its place within Kant's life and career will help to explain why the debate has been primarily framed in these limited terms.

Re-Framing the Debate

Whatever his later attitude towards ghosts and spirit-seeing, Kant's initial response to Charlotte von Knobloch demonstrates considerable interest in Swedenborg's psychic feats and an apparent willingness to consider their possible reality. In a letter now dated August 10, 1763 (more or less by consensus[104]), he responded to Fräulein von Knobloch, reporting what he knew

[104] The letter was originally published in an 1804 biography of Kant by Borowski, and was dated August 1758. As this clearly falls prior to any of the events in Swedenborg's life that it reports on, this date must be false. The philosopher J. F. J. Tafel noted this discrepancy and dated the letter to 1768, but by the time the letter was published as part of the Academy edition, scholars had settled on the 1763 date. For a history of this controversy, see Ernst Benz, *Swedenborg in Deutschland: F. C. Oetingers und Immanuel Kants Auseinandersetzung mit der Person und Lehre Emanuel Swedenborgs* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1947): 247-271.

of Swedenborg's recent psychic feats in some detail.[105] Knobloch had asked for his thoughts on the subject, and Kant pursued the question doggedly before writing his reply, which begins:

> Ich würde mich der Ehre und des Vergnügens nicht so lange beraubt haben, dem Befehl einer Dame, die die Zierde ihres Geschlechts ist, durch die Abstattung des erforderten Berichts nachzukommen, wenn ichs nicht vor nöthig erachtet hätte, zuvor eine vollständigere Erkundigung in dieser Sache einzuziehen (*K* 40)

He attributes his delay to his thorough investigation of the topic, he seems unwilling to jump to any conclusions, and he approaches the subject with a notable openness. He goes on to say that he generally thinks it wiser "sich auf die verneinende Seite zu lenken" when it comes to these "Geschichte von Erscheinungen und Handlungen des Geisterreichs" (*K* 42). He refuses, however, to hastily assume that all such stories are false: "Um nun das Vorurtheil von Erscheinungen und Gesichtern nicht durch ein neues Vorurtheil blindlings zu verwerfen, fand ich es vernünftig, mich nach dieser Geschichte näher zu erkundigen" (*K* 42).[106] Though it is a bit paradoxical, Kant considers it a "reasonable" choice to suspend his assumptions about the falsity of the supernatural; as dismissing such stories without proof would be its own form of prejudice, equally as bad as any superstition, the proper approach for the philosopher must be to temporarily embrace the supernatural and consider the possibility.

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[105] All page numbers refer to the following text and will be henceforth cited in parentheses according to the following format (*K* [page #]). Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Berlin Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, G. Reimer, 1900): 10:40-45.

[106] There are many notable echoes of certain passages from the Knobloch letter in the *Träume*; here for example, we find this counterpart in the later text: "Since it is an equally foolish bias to disbelieve, for no reason, many things that are recounted and have the appearance of reality, as to believe, without proof, everything that is contained in general rumors, the author of this piece has, in order to avoid the latter bias, allowed himself to be pushed along by the former." ["Da es ebensowohl ein dummes Vorurteil ist, von vielem, das mit einigem Schein der Wahrheit erzählt wird, ohne Grund nichts zu glauben, als von dem, was das gemeine Gerüchte sagt, ohne Prüfung alles zu glauben, so ließ sich der Verfasser dieser Schrift, um dem ersten Vorurteile auszuweichen, zum Teil von dem letzteren fortschleppen"] (318).

Kant may also, however, have been especially willing to consider this particular case of spirit-seeing because Swedenborg's exchange with the spirit seemed to produce useful and accurate knowledge. Swedenborg did not simply report that he had personal encounters with spirits and angels; rather he used his connection with the spirit world to gain information that he could not have accessed by any material means. His purported exchanges with the deceased husband of Madame Harteville, for example, resulted in the discovery of "eine verborgene Schublade" containing a set of very important papers (*K* 43-44). In 1756, while spending time with a group of fifteen men on the estate of William Castel in Gothenburg, Swedenborg reported that a fire had broken out in Stockholm (nearly 300 miles away) at that very moment. As though he were seeing news of this fire on some sort of spiritual television,[107] Swedenborg gave regular updates throughout the day about how much the fire had spread and when it had finally been contained. The details of his reports were confirmed by messages that came in from Stockholm in the ensuing days (*K* 44-45). Writing about these stories in his letter to Knobloch, Kant asks, "Was kann man wider die Glaubwürdigkeit dieser Begebenheit anführen?" [108] (*K* 45). His general tone is one of excitement, wonder and curiosity. "Wie sehr wunsche ich, daß ich diesen sonderbaren Mann selbst hätte fragen können," he muses, unsatisfied with the reports that others have brought back to him (*K* 45). Swedenborg's ability to gain this information through

[107] See Stefan Andriopoulos, "Psychic Television," *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 3 (2005).

[108] Again, there are echoes of this letter in the *Träume*: "What philosopher has not cut the most ridiculous figure imaginable, trapped between the assertions of a reasonable eye witness who is sure of what he saw and the inner resistance of unshakable doubts? Should he simply deny outright the truthfulness of all such ghostly apparitions? What reason can he have to reject them?" ["Welcher Philosoph hat nicht einmal zwischen den Beteurungen eines vernünftigen und fest überredeten Augenzeugen und der inneren Gegenwehr eines unüberwindlichen Zweifels die einfältigste Figur gemacht, die man sich vorstellen kann? Soll er die Richtigkeit aller solcher Geistererscheinungen gänzlich ableugnen? Was kann er vor Gründe anführen, sie zu widerlegen?"] (317).

connection with the spirit world counters both of Kant's usual objections to such stories—that the apparitions are usually ungraspable (*unbegreiflich*) and useless (*unnützlich*).[109] Swedenborg's ability to communicate with spirits seems genuine, and it produces useful knowledge.

Between his 1763 response to Charlotte von Knobloch and his publication of the *Träume* in 1767, Kant seems to have acquired a negative opinion of Swedenborg. In the *Träume*, Kant implicitly references Swedenborg's 8 volume *Arcana Coelestia* with clear disdain, speaking of a "großes Werk" that he had "gekauft und, welches noch schlimmer ist, gelesen [...]" (*TG* 318) Despite the likelihood that these remarks pertain to the *Arcana*, some scholars maintain that the mystic-theologian had a disguised and/or widely unacknowledged impact on the philospher's work. Many of these scholars base their arguments on indications of when exactly Kant read Swedenborg's book. Though his 1763 letter to Knobloch suggests that he had yet to read it—"Ich warte mit Sehnsucht auf das Buch, das Swedenborg in London herausgeben will" (*K* 45)—Ronald Calinger has suggested that Kant was reading the *Arcana coelestia* as early as the 1750's, and that Kant may even have "derived [from it] the rudiments of his nebular hypothesis [elaborated in his 1755 work *Theorie des Himmels*[110]]. "[111] While Calinger makes a case for Swedenborg's influence on Kant's earlier writings, other scholars suggest that Kant's later

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[109] From the Knobloch letter: "So viel ist gewiß, daß ungeachtet aller Geschichten von Erscheinungen und Handlungen des Geisterreichs, davon mir eine große Menge der wahrscheinlichsten bekannt ist, ich doch jederzeit der Regel der gesunden Vernunft am gemäßesten zu seyn erachtet habe, sich auf die verneinende Seite zu lenken; nicht als ob ich vermeinet, die Unmöglichkeit davon eingesehen zu haben, (denn, wie wenig ist uns doch von der Natur eines Geistes bekannt?) sondern, weil sie insgesamt nicht genugsam bewiesen sind; übrigens auch, was die *Unbegreiflichkeit* dieser Art Erscheinungen, imgleichen ihre *Unnützlichkeit* anlangt, der Schwierigkeiten so viele sind [...]" (*K* 41, my emphasis).

[110] Immanuel Kant,*Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, ed.Berlin Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, G. Reimer, 1912): vol 1.

[111] Ronald Calinger, "Kant and Newtonian Science," in Isis 70:3 (September, 1979): 352.

ethical philosophy owes a debt to Swedenborg, too; these scholars reject the definitiveness of the negative opinions expressed about Swedenborg in the *Träume*, and cite evidence that Kant continued to draw on Swedenborg's ideas long after the publication of 1766 text.[112]

Further scholarly debates center around more personal matters, interrogating both Kant's motivations for writing the Träume in the first place and his personal feelings towards Swedenborg. When he first sent it to Moses Mendelssohn on February 7, 1766, Kant implied that the text exorcised his earlier interest in Swedenborg, calling it "eine gleichsam abgedrungene[113] Schrift."[114] He elaborated on this idea later: because he had spent so long looking into and having correspondences about Swedenborg, he anticipated "daß [er] nicht eher von der unausläßlich Nachfrage würde Ruhe haben, als bis [er] [s]ich der bei [ihm] vermutheten Kenntnis aller dieser Anekdoten erledigt hätte."[115] Julius Ebbinghaus has argued that Kant did not conceive of himself in opposition to Swedenborg,[116] but Kant's admission in this letter to Mendelssohn suggests that he felt it necessary to distance himself from this controversial philosopher/clairvoyant. Though this decision to oppose and differentiate himself from Swedenborg might be read as a strategic intellectual maneuver, John Manolesco interprets it as the actions of a man who felt personally

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[112] In his translation of the *Träume*, Gregory R. Johnson has a comprehensive bibliography listing those scholars who have challenged what he calls the "received view" of Kant's relationship to Swedenborg. See especially Note 10 in: *Kant on Swedenborg: Dreams of a Spirit-Seer and Other Writings,* ed. Gregory R. Johnson, trans. Gregory R. Johnson and Gleen Alexander Magee (Swedenborg Foundation Publishers: 2002): 149.

[113] *abgedrungen* from *abdringe*n = "eine sache ungestüm, mit gewalt abzwingen, von einem wegdrängen" [Grimms Wörterbuch].

[114] Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, ed.Berlin Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, G. Reimer, 1900): 10:65.

[115] Ibid. 10:66.

[116] See Julius Ebbinghaus, "Kant und Swedenborg," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze und Reden* (Hildesheim, 1968).

slighted because Swedenborg never responded to his letters. Kant did indeed try to contact Swedenborg directly and received no response. For Manolesco, it therefore makes sense to offer a psychological reading of the *Träume* as the work of someone suffering a mid-life crisis: slighted by Swedenborg, jilted by women, Kant eventually let his bitterness spill onto the page, using irony and sarcasm to attack a man who had hurt his feelings.[117]

All of these readings assume that the evident contradictions of the text must originate in Kant's conflicted feelings about Swedenborg, whether emotional or intellectual, but both Stefan Andriopoulos and Liliane Weissberg have suggested that the textual complications arise from the challenges inherent in the theme of ghost-seeing itself. Andriopoulos argues that Kant reveals the illusory nature of spirit seeing through an analogy involving the magic lantern, a piece of optical technology. The 18th century magic lantern can best be thought of as a kind of primitive slide projector: with an image (such as a portrait), a light source, and a concave mirror, one could make an image appear to be floating in the air or in a cloud of smoke. These devices were popular throughout the eighteenth century both for the purposes of scientific presentations and for creating dramatic effects, startling audiences at theater pieces or "spirit-shows."[118] Andriopoulos shows that while the magic lantern constituted a cultural craze—particularly in the latter half of the eighteenth century—it also played an important role in philosophical discourse.[119] Through careful analysis of the language that Kant uses to describe how spiritual

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[117] See John Manolesco, "Introduction," in his translation of *Dreams of a Spirit Seer Illustrated by Dreams of Metaphysics* (New York: Vantage Press, 1969).

[118] Andriopoulos 49-52.

[119] Ibid. 44: "[...]in linking Kant's critical epistemology to late eighteenth-century optical media I conceptualize the magic lantern as both a material object within an arrangement of cultural practices and a discursive figure within philosophical texts."

apparitions appear before a person's senses, Andriopoulos finds a clear parallel "between ghostly visions and the perception of optical illusions [...] in a passage [in Kant] that denounces the seeing of apparitions as the delusion of an enthusiastic imagination."[120] Andriopoulos traces the logic of Kant's argument: because seeing the ghostly apparition is analogous to being fooled by the optical illusion of a magic lantern, it follows that ghostly apparitions must also be tricks—in this case, of imagination and human perception. Andriopoulos's reading identifies two important implications of Kant's text—the analogy between perceiving a ghost and perceiving the projection of a magic lantern, and the potential this analogy creates for discrediting the plausibility of ghostly apparitions. The ghost, insofar as it is like the projection of a magic lantern, is also nothing more than a delusion.

While Andriopoulos identifies Kant's association of ghosts with delusion, Weissberg builds an argument that connects the ghosts in the *Träume* with fiction and the irrational: "der Ort des Irrationalen [i.e. the locale of ghosts] [ist] bei Kant mit dem der Fiktion verwandt."[121] Weissberg argues that Kant relegates ghosts to the realm of fiction because it is impossible to incorporate them into a philosophy of reason. Excluding ghosts from a philosophy of reason proves problematic for the text, however, and contradictions and paradoxes begin to emerge; fictionality begins to reappear as a characteristic of the *Träume* as well.[122] Following Martin Heidegger,[123] Weissberg notes that when Kant adjusts the parameters of metaphysics—transferring the focus of metaphysical inquiry from the domain of conceptual abstraction to the

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[120] Andriopoulos 48.

[121] Weissberg 240.

[122] Pourciau 118, note 7, 101.

[123] See Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1951).

domain bounded by human reason[124]— he unintentionally generates paradox in concepts that are simultaneously included and excluded from philosophical inquiry.[125] The "technical term" ["technische Ausdruck"] *(speculative) metaphysics* shifts from being the catch-all phrase for knowledge of diverse concepts that lie outside the realm of everyday life – for "diverse Texte außerhalb eines Textkanons"—and becomes "die Bestimmung eines 'Restes' außerhalb des physikalischen Welt und über den Textkörper hinaus."[126] Weissberg recognizes a problem in Kant's project of an Enlightenment Philosophy if it is supposed to be both *true* and *complete*—purportedly illuminating any and all questions. In Kant's efforts to be true, he must exclude from his inquiry whatever falls outside the purview of human reason; in his desire to be complete, he must include and address those outlying questions. Weissberg observes that Kant's Enlightenment is ultimately obligated to shut out the speculative metaphysical realm if it hopes to maintain its integrity (its truth), but doing so calls the entire effort of the Enlightenment into question (since that philosophy must also be complete).[127]

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[124] As in this famous passage from the *Träume*, which suggests a new definition of the term "metaphysics" (different than the speculative metaphysics practiced by the Wolffians): "In so fern ist die Metaphysik eine Wissenschaft von der Grenzen der menschlichen Vernunft" (368).

[125] For more on this problematic blend of rationalism and irrationalism in Kant's philosophy specifically, see Harmut and Gernot Böhme, *Das Andere Der Vernunft: Zur Entwicklung von Rationalitätsstrukturen am Beispiel Kants* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983); though this is a scholarly tradition that could traced back to Horkheimer's and Adorno's *Kritik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1969).

[126] Weissberg 35.

[127] Weissberg 240: "Auf eine unheimliche Weise verbindet sich jedoch [Kants] Suche nach den abzulehnenden Geistern mit der Suche nach der wahren Philosophie. Philosophie soll [...] ein vollkommenes, geschlossenes System darstellen. Gelichzeitig ist die das (noch) nicht erreichte Andere. Dem autoritären Wunschdenken des Philosophen tritt eine Philosophie entgegen, die sich nicht vollkommen zeigen kann und will [...] Der Kantsche Versuch, Philosophie als imperials System zu begreifen und es in und als Abgrenzung zum Irrationalen zu verstehen, zeigt sich als Höhepunkt der Aufklärung und stellt gleichzeitig ihr Scheitern dar [...] Wie die *Träume*

Both Weissberg and Andriopoulos identify a contradiction in the *Träume*'s evaluation of ghost-seeing; Andriopoulos emphasizes Kant's dual classification of a ghost as delusion and perceptual reality, while Weissberg finds paradox in Kant's choice to relegate the ghost to fiction even as he folds it into his philosophy. This chapter expands on the insightful work done by both Andriopoulos and Weissberg by analyzing an additional paradox in Kant's assessment of ghosts, generated around the question of their utility. Though I consider the previously explored paradoxes—reality and delusion, philosophy and fiction—my reading primarily examines contradiction in Kant's assertions that ghosts are both useless and useful. Early in the *Träume*, as in the 1763 Knobloch letter, Kant refers to ghosts as essentially useless, though his language changes in a crucial way between the letter and the text. When writing to Knobloch, Kant referred to ghosts as "useless" ["unnützlich"]; in the *Träume*, he calls them "unused (unutilized)" ["ungenützt"]. The shift suggests that Kant may feel that there is an untapped potential for usefulness in ghost stories—one that he will perhaps tease out. Indeed, despite his stated conviction that ghosts are useless, he devotes a considerable amount of effort (and a considerable number of pages) to an inquiry into them. Furthermore, by the end of the *Träume*, he suggests, in a cryptic phrase, that the text has in fact "been useful" ["nützen"] to the reader. This seems to make the project of the *Träume* inherently paradoxical; Kant suggests that it is a useful text about a useless topic. To understand this contradiction, my chapter explores the parallels between the structure of the *Träume* and that of a ghost story. When Kant suspends his normal disbelief in the supernatural and entertains the question of ghost-seeing, he builds a philosophical discourse that

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zeigen, ist der Ort des Irrationalen bei Kant mit dem der Fiktion verwandt [...] Kants Grenzziehung, Definition der wahren Philosophie als Abgrenzung zur Fiktion führt zu keiner reinen, rationalen Philosophie, wie sich sich der Aufklärung erträumt, sondern zu einem Diskurs, der im Prozeß des Ausschließens selbst die Ziele der Aufklärung in Frage stellt."

temporarily accommodates "fictional" or "figurative" elements and structures; his act of defining the ghost conjures it into existence as a textual "figure," which he can then use to reference and critique the basic concepts of speculative metaphysics. It is in the figurative and semiotic potential of the word "*Geist*" that Kant discovers its usefulness.

Finding the Ghost: Definition as Conjuring Act

For a valid comparison to be drawn between the *Träume* and a ghost story, some manner of "ghost" would need to appear within the text, though this ghost need not present itself to Kant's physical senses like those Swedenborg claimed to perceive in the surrounding world. Kant might be said to practice an alternate form of spirit-seeing when he suspends his disbelief in the spirit world and constructs/perceives the ghost as a textual figure. Kant's process of invoking a figurative ghost within his text begins when he recognizes that the meaning of the word "ghost" is unclear and vexing. Though people regularly tell stories about ghosts, Kant asserts: "Ich weiß also nicht, ob es Geister gebe, ja was noch mehr ist, ich weiß nicht einmal, was das Wort Geist bedeute!" (*TG* 320). Though there are two separate lines of inquiry referenced here—into the *existence* of *"Geister"* and into the *definition* of *"Geist"*—Kant fuses them into one sentence and implies a connection or dependency between the two endeavors; if *Geister* may not exist, how can one define the word *Geist*? Conversely, if Kant succeeds in defining *Geist,* does he not, at least hypothetically, instantiate the existence of *Geister*? Having implied dependency between these two lines of inquiry, Kant could be said to make the ghost "appear" in Part One of the *Träume* through the act of defining what the word *Geist* means.

In Part I.1, Kant offers a provisional definition for "*Geist*" by assigning to it three qualities: *consciousness*,[128] *penetrability*, and *extension*.[129] As the spirit of a human being, a ghost shares the quality of consciousness that also belongs to people. Insofar as they are not made up of material substance, ghosts are indeed *penetrable*—physical matter can pass through them. At the same time, ghosts have at least the appearance of being *extended*, as their form seems to take up a certain amount of physical space. Kant's definition of ghosts pointedly ignores some of the contentious religious issues that were otherwise part of the debates about ghosts in the eighteenth century.[130] His definition does not consider whether a ghost is the spirit of someone trapped in limbo or an emissary from a parallel spiritual world. He instead limits himself to determining what qualities define the unique nature of a ghost and distinguish it from all other beings: it is a conscious being that is both extended in space but also penetrable (immaterial).

All three qualities that Kant ascribes to the *Geist* are important to its definition, but the qualities of *penetrability* and *extension* help define the figurative role that the *Geist* plays in the *Träume*. The quality of consciousness, Kant argues, does very little to distinguish ghosts from human beings: "Ein Geist, heißt es, ist ein Wesen, der Venunft hat [...] So ist es denn also keine Wundergabe Geister zu sehen; denn wer Menschen sieht, der sieht Wesen, die Vernunft haben" (*TG* 319). To distinguish ghosts more effectively from other beings, Kant relies heavily on the other two qualities: *penetrability* and *extension*. These qualities not only make the *Geist* unique but also connect it with both sides of an important debate between two competing doctrines of

[128] Cf. *TG* 319

[129] Ibid. 321-33.

[130] Cf. Shane McCorristine, *Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2010).

speculative metaphysics during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries—the debate between one-substance and two-substance doctrines. In the project of his Critical Philosophy, Kant advocated a turn away from this sort of speculative metaphysics, but his education and early work was still informed by it as the dominant philosophical paradigm. To understand how he uses the ghost as a figurative element that stands in for the speculative metaphysical system that he wants to oppose, it will be important to understand the basic contours of the one-substance/two-substance debate and to see how the ghost, as a *penetrable* but *extended* being, straddles both sides of it.

A significant early turning point for the beginning of the one-substance/two-substance debate can be found in Descartes' division of mind from body in the *Sixth Meditation.* Gilbert Ryle, writing in 1949, has already famously associated this moment with ghosts in the history of philosophy; he coined the phrase "the ghost in the machine" to describe what he considered to be Descartes' fundamental category mistake.[131] Descartes suggested that mind and body are separate from one another, and that the physical body exists in a material world that moves according to a set of rational, natural laws. The physical body's connection with that clockwork materiality essentially turns it into a machine[132] in which the immaterial mind, supposedly capable of exercising free will, is trapped. The mind now possesses two of the qualities that Kant ascribes to *Geist*—it is conscious, and it is immaterial. But as Ryle argues, in separating the mind

[131] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949). The term "category mistake" is Ryle's.

[132] "And as a clock, composed of wheels and counter weights, observes not the less accurately all the laws of nature when it is ill made, and points out the hours incorrectly, than when it satisfies the desire of the maker in every respect; so likewise if the body of man be considered as a kind of machine, so made up and composed of bones, nerves, muscles, veins, blood, and skin [...]" Rene Descartes, *Sixth Meditation*.

from materiality, Descartes locks the mind away in a "spirit" (immaterial) world and commits a category mistake: how can the Cartesian system account for the fact that mind and body interact with one another, now that they exist in completely distinct worlds (in different categories)? Though Ryle was the one to coin the famous phrase, "the ghost in the machine," other philosophers objected to Descartes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well. Descartes' division of spirit from body, they reasoned, raised a fundamental problem about the nature of free will and causality. How would it be possible for the mind/spirit, which must be of a fundamentally different nature than physical matter, to cause any sort of action or motion in that physical body?[133]

Descartes' two-substance theory recognized the quality of *immateriality* (which Kant's calls *penetrability*) in the soul, but his "notion of the soul entirely excludes extension." [134] He views extension—the quality of taking up or filling a physical space—as a quality of matter, not of mind.[135] His critics found this problematic, and had difficulty imagining how a non-extended immaterial substance could interact with an extended, material substance. Hobbes' rejected Descartes' theory of mind, ascribing instead to a one-substance system that viewed mind as

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[133] See for example Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia's letters to Descartes (in 1643): "·The question arises· because it seems that how a thing moves depends solely on (i) how much it is pushed, (ii) the manner in which it is pushed, or (iii) the surface-texture and shape of the thing that pushes it. The first two of those require contact between the two things, and the third requires that the causally active thing be extended. Your notion of the soul entirely excludes extension, and it appears to me that an immaterial thing can't possibly touch anything else." *The Correspondence Between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and Rene Descartes* (Chicago: U of Chicago, 2007).

[134] Ibid.

[135] "I remark, in the next place, that the mind does not immediately receive the impression from all the parts of the body, but only from the brain, or perhaps even from *one small part* of it, viz., that in which the common sense (senses communis) is said to be [...]" Descartes, *Sixth Meditation* (my emphasis).

coextensive with matter. The "stuff" that normally comprises a spirit or ghost is, in this case, inextricably bound up with matter itself. This explains how the soul can interact with and impact matter—causing, for instance, the movement of the body—but it also means that the soul no longer has the quality of immateriality.[136] In a one-substance system, the *Geist* is granted the quality of extension but denied the quality of immateriality.

The philosophical debate between one-substance and two-substance doctrines persisted well into the eighteenth century and throughout the Enlightenment.[137] Spinoza and his followers continued the one-substance doctrine, postulating that matter and spirit were coextensive. The idea of a disembodied (immaterial) spirit would seem to be as foreign to Spinoza's system as it was to Hobbes'.[138] In Germany, Spinoza was generally marginalized in favor of Leibniz and Wolff, who further the two-substance philosophical program, developing new insights into the relationship between spirit and matter. Wolff was a proponent of pre-established harmony, a doctrine suggesting that matter and spirit had no causal relationship to one another, but merely the appearance of a harmonious connection.[139] If a physical foot moved along a trajectory that seemed to make contact with a ball, the ball might go sailing through the air as though an impact between foot and ball had occurred; in truth, foot and ball existed in no direct causal relationship

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[136] "And therefore if a man should talk to me of a round quadrangle; or accidents of bread in cheese; or *immaterial substances; or of a free subject*; a free will; or any free but free from being hindered by opposition; I should not say he were in an error, but that his words were without meaning; that is to say, absurd." Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan*, 1651.

[137] Jonathan Israel stresses that the fundamental division in Enlightenment thinking, which he also characterizes as the division between Moderate and Radical Enlightenment, is rooted in this split between one-substance (Spinoza) and two-substance (Leibnis, Wolff, etc.) philosophies. See for example the Introduction to *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution and Human Rights 1750-1790* (New York: Oxford UP, 2011).

[138] See Spinoza's 1764 correspondences with Hugo Boxel on the subject of ghosts.

[139] Cf. Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophers: Kant and His Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP): 224-227.

to one another—the potential for all of their motions were contained completely within the spiritual essence of the individual objects, and the fact that they moved as though in accordance with a set of definable laws was due to the grace of God, who had arranged the universe in such a way as to allow for this harmony. Kant was educated in a version of Wolffian metaphysics, though he was also among those who challenged the doctrine of pre-established harmony; he tended to favor a principle of physical influx instead, which suggested that it was possible for impulses to cross from spirit to matter and effect changes in the material world. At least one reading of the *Träume* has suggested that Kant conceived the text, in part, as an effort to revise his perspectives on physical influx. If theories of physical influx played any role in how Kant thought of the *Träume*, they certainly became less important over time, as the text develops into a critical take on the whole system of speculative metaphysics.

In defining *Geist* with the attributes of penetrability (immateriality) and extension, Kant borrows terminology belonging to one-substance and the two-substance doctrines, simultaneously invoking and contradicting both. One-substance doctrines granted extension to the conscious self by unifying it with matter, thereby denying its immateriality; two-substance doctrines proposed an immaterial conscious self without the quality of extension.[140] Kant draws from both of these systems of thought, and builds a definition of *Geist* that combines paradoxical terms. Having suspended his disbelief about the reality of the spirit world, he unconventionally and playfully uses the terminology of speculative metaphysics to conjure the possibility of a

[140] Wolff and Leibniz, in their theory of the soul, tend to allow for the possibility of supernatural intrusions in life, more so than any of the other philosophers thus far; because pre-established harmony is established by God, it stands to reason that God can also effect miracles and make apparitions appear in the world, should he choose to (See White 271). It is perhaps because of this slight inclination towards allowing for the possibility of something like a ghost that Wolff and Leibniz often feel more like the targets in the *Träume*, even though all of these various philosophical positions are really under attack.

spiritual figure. Once conceived through the process of definition, Kant seems intrigued by the possibility of an extended immaterial being appearing as a ghost in the material world: "warum sollte [ein denkendes Ich] [...] nicht auch künftig dahin wiederum zurückkehren?" (*TG* 327). If the conditions of the (hypothetical) ghost's existence mirror the terms with which the word "Geist" is defined, then the "ghost" in Kant's *Träume* is a reflection—even a representation—of speculative metaphysical concepts. Having built his definition and conjured a hypothetical "ghost" with the terminology of speculative metaphysics, Kant progresses into the next section of the *Träume* able to confront the "ghost figure" and all it represents.

The Ghost Story Proper

Kant relied on the philosophical terminology and concepts of speculative metaphysics in I.1 to construct a definition of a hypothetical *Geist*, but the next section of the *Träume* regularly employs figurative and affectively-charged language to describe the prospect of confronting that ghost. The remaining three sections of Part I resemble the portion of the ghost story in which the hero, in a state of suspense and believing now in the reality of the supernatural, moves toward that ostensibly supernatural phenomenon. In a sense, this portion of the *Träume* shows the consequences of suspending one's disbelief to explore hypothetical ideas:

> Es ist bisweilen nötig, den Denker, der auf unrechtem Wege ist, durch die Folgen zu *erschrecken*, damit er aufmerksamer auf die Grundsätze werde, durch welche er sich gleichsam träumend hat fortführen lassen. (*TG* 328, my emphasis)

Even at this relatively early point in the *Träume*, Kant quietly acknowledges that his inquiry follows the "wrong path"; in this case, the thinker he has to frighten is actually himself. The use of the verb "erschrecken" here exemplifies the kind of affective charge that Kant's language takes on in this section. Rather than evaluating whether the ghost is true or false, Kant uses it to

stimulate an evaluation of the "basic ideas" [*Grundsätze*] that allow one to charge down the wrong path. The apparition of the ghost is actually an early "consequence" [*Folge*] of those basic ideas; appropriately, Kant plans to use that ghost as a means of *frightening* himself and his readers away from the ideas that created the possibility for that apparition—namely, the concepts and principles of speculative metaphysics.

The notoriously difficult section I.2 of the *Träume* begins with some poetic images that initiate the section of text most analogous to a "ghost story"— in which Kant will actually frighten himself by seeking out and encountering that hypothetical ghost. He describes this as the beginning of a journey into the darkness of an unknown realm: "Das schwache Licht der Metaphysik" has made "das Reich der Schatten sichtbar" (*TG* 329). This image, still somewhat abstract, nevertheless has narrative potency. The reader imagines himself standing with Kant at the edge of a dark wood, the only illumination offered by a flickering torch held in a quivering hand. Like sympathetic readers of any good ghost story, we are frightened by what lies before us, but also strangely compelled to press onwards: "wir wollen daher nach der beschwerlichen Vorbereitung, welche überstanden ist, uns auf den gefährlichen Weg wagen" (*TG* 329). Apart from the poetic flourishes of this remark—for example, the subtle alliteration of "**w**ir **w**ollen... **W**eg **w**agen"—one can again observe Kant using affectively- and narratively-charged language to describe the next phase of his philosophical inquiry. Having overcome (or, more dramatically, survived [*überstanden*]) the preparations of defining the ghost in I.1, Kant readies himself to strike out in search of it.[141]

[141] Kant lets Virgil do the heavy poetic lifting for him. He cites the poet several times throughout the *Träume*, including here at the opening of I.2: "Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbras, / Perque domos Ditis vacuas et inania regna" (329). ["Now dim to one another, in desolate night

The terms of Kant's definition generate conflict in the presumed location of *Geister*—does the *Geist*'s permeability identify it as immaterial, or does its extension tie it to matter? If Kant is entertaining the possibility of physical influx, then an immaterial *Geist* may have access to matter even as it's defined as non-matter. One of the first necessary consequences of Kant's act of defining *Geist* in I.1 is that he must additionally hypothesize a place or dimension in which these immaterial, extended beings dwell—a "spirit world" [*Geisterwelt*]. The figurative language and the references to Dante at the start of I.2 metaphorically position him standing at the start of a path. Should he follow it, that path will lead him towards an:

> immaterielle Welt, [die] also als ein für sich bestehendes Ganze angesehen werden [kann], deren Theile untereinander in wechselseitiger Verknüpfund und Gemeinschaft stehen, auch ohne Vermittelung körperlicher Dinge. (*TG* 330)

In entertaining the existence of *Geister*, Kant also finds himself entertaining an entire immaterial world. If not overtly frightening, this description is literally unsettling, as it postulates the dissolution of normal divisions of time and space that help define the world of "todte Materie" in which we normally reside (*TG* 329). In the immaterial world that he posits, following from his definition of *Geist,* Kant must also modify his cognitive habits, as the normal categories that allow the organization of thought and experience do not apply. To continue his initial line of inquiry, Kant must accept whatever strange conditions follow; like the protagonist of a ghost story, he decides to follow a path into unknown and potentially perilous territory.

The way Kant makes this decision, adjusting the general tone of his inquiry and departing from the reasonable approach he has adopted thus far, fits a pattern that will later become a recurrent trope in supernatural literature; it resembles the moment when a protagonist decides, often against his or her better judgment, to move towards the danger of a supernatural threat

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they walked on through the gloom, Through Dis' homes all void and empty realms"] Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Random House, 1981): 169.

rather than retreating from it. A shifting and confusing spirit world, ungoverned by normal rules of time and space, seems like dangerous (and unusual) ground for a philosopher like Kant, but he allows himself to play the part of the "guileless protagonist" and continues to follow the path laid out before him. Writing again in a playful style, he reports on his decision to shift the tone of his inquiry with irony and sarcasm, implying his disapproval of the choice while pretending to condone it:

> Es wird mir nachgerade beschwerlich, immer die behutsame Sprache der Vernunft zu führen. Warum sollte es mir nicht auch erlaubt sein, im akademischen Tone zu reden, der entscheidender ist und sowohl den Verfasser als den Leser des Nachdenkens überhebt, welches über lang oder kurz beide nur zu einer verdrießlichen Unentschlossenheit führen muß. (*TeG* 333)

Kant signals irony to the reader, here, by adopting attitudes antithetical to his genuine sentiments and to readers' knowledge of him. "Reason," generally positive for Kant, is comically vilified as "beschwerlich," and as leading to "einer verdrießlichen Unentschlossenheit." He also describes the language of reason as "behutsam," and though the word is negatively charged in this context, the positive connotations of it cue the reader's understanding of Kant's irony. When he professes relief at the thought of shirking the "burden of thinking" and adopting an "academic tone," Kant signals sarcasm by juxtaposing these terms as oppositional—though "academic" might not be the readers' first choice in describing *un*burdened thought, Kant pairs them together. The ironic desire he expresses here for an unburdened academic tone, effectively condemns an unscrupulous academic mind as *un*desirable. This is only one of several points throughout the *Träume* where Kant lampoons scholars, school teachers and other philosophers—all of whom he views as practitioners of the type of academic tone referenced above. The passage also works to establish two distinct types of people: those who would utilize the "scrupulous [*behutsame*] language of reason," and those who favor the "academic tone" of pedantic scholars. The subject

of the ghost could be said to help distinguish these two camps, as pursuing it causes Kant to shift from one stream to the other. Later, Kant will return to the motif of "reasonableness" [*Behutsamkeit*] in order to reiterate the division between himself and those who continue to practice the kind of speculative metaphysical philosophy that forces one to venture into the nebulousness of the spirit world and to utilize an academic tone.

The next section of I.2 shows Kant temporarily abandoning the scruples of reason and exercising the "decisiveness" (or presumptuousness) that he associates with an "academic" mentality; in this tone, he addresses the possibility of perceiving a ghostly apparition. Given the terms he has outlined, Kant considers whether and how a ghost might appear to the human senses. The tone in this section is subtly but crucially different; Kant transitions away from reason, assumes a more "decisive" tone, and ultimately dismisses scrupulous distinctions in an off-hand way. Early in this section, he muses that:

> Es würde schön sein, wenn eine dergleichen systematische Verfassung der Geisterwelt, als wir sie vorstellen, nicht lediglich aus dem Begriffe von der geistigen Natur überhaupt, der gar zu sehr hypothetisch ist, sondern aus irgendeiner wirklichen und allgemein zugestandenen Beobachtung könnte geschlossen, oder auch nur wahrscheinlich vermutet werden. (*TG* 333)

Though Kant might ordinarily find "wirklichen und allgemein zugestandenen Beobachtung" to be *necessary* or *required* for further study, he humorously tempers those sentiments into the polite understatement that such empirical information "würde schön sein" to have. Disregarding the impossibility of empirical observation, and relying instead on the implications of his definition in I.1, Kant goes on to conjecture that every person, possessing both a physical body and a *Geist* (conscious self), must simultaneously live in two worlds: the surrounding physical world, and the *Geisterwelt.* During everyday life, only the material being is "klar empfindet", but the "Ungleichartkeit der geistigen Vorstellungen und derer, die zum leiblichen Leben des

Menschen gehören, darf indessen nicht als eine so große Hinderniß angesehen werden" to "Einflüße von Seiten der Geisterwelt" passing into the consciousness of the material self (*TG* 332, 338). Kant again creates irony by communicating this significant claim in an offhand, almost careless manner. Though he acknowledges the "Ungleichartigkeit" of the physical and spiritual worlds—a problem that might ordinarily cause him to suffer "verdrießlichen Unentschlossenheit"—Kant casually chooses not to recognize it as "eine so große Hinderniß" to perceptions crossing that boundary. Nothing *seems* to be stopping influxes entering from the spiritual world, so why should they not be felt? The quiet irony of this explanation, which professes the insignificance of a considerable "Ungleichartigkeit," highlights the tenuous nature of Kant's discourse even as it carries him to an explanation for the perception of ghostly apparitions. These influxes from the spiritual world, he conjectures, can then "[erwecken] analogische Vorstellungen unserer Sinne" such that "die empfundenen Gegenwart eines Geistes [erscheint] in das Bild einer menschlichen Figure" (*TG* 339). Kant hypothesizes that when a person "sees" a ghost, he is actually creating that image himself, translating a perception that he feels entering from the spiritual world into the perception of a figure in the material world.

Kant's hypothesis about the source of a ghostly apparition has moral implications that both were controversial at the time and have continued to be an issue in scholarship on the *Träume*. He suggests that an individual *Geist*, residing in the undifferentiated *Geisterwelt*, does not experience the same stark division between itself and others that one experiences as a material being. The influxes that cross over from the spiritual world do not necessarily come from the individual *Geist* connected with the material being who receives the influx and perceives the ghost. Kant theorizes that what the material self perceives internally is actually the presence of "ein fremder Wille", acting and causing perceptions as though from within that

material self (*TG* 334). From a moral standpoint, Kant notes that this helps to check the material self's natural inclination towards egotism; since *Geister* exist in undifferentiated community with one another, the inherent egotism of the material self can be held at bay by moral feelings perceived as spiritual influxes from foreign wills. An enduring scholarly debate has considered whether this early theory—articulated here as a possible *frightening* consequence of a theory of ghost-seeing—has echoes in the moral philosophy that Kant would eventually articulate in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In the *Träume*, Kant sets aside the moral question and pushes his theory of ghostly perceptions even further. With the same cavalier decisiveness that has characterized his tone ever since abandoning the scrupulousness of reason, Kant imbues his hypotheses about spirit-seeing with the authority of natural law by suggesting an analogy with Newton's theory of gravitation (*TG* 335). The phenomenon of gravity suggests that planetary bodies at a distance can nevertheless act upon and effect one another, and Kant likens this to his theory of foreign wills generating spiritual influxes within the material self. The unspoken but obvious difference between gravity and spirit-seeing is that the former can be deduced from an empirical observation that is available to all, and the latter is used to explain an ostensible perception to which a limited number of people purport to have access. In fact, Kant's theory of spirit-seeing began as an attempt to see if he could imagine a set of conditions under which perceiving a ghost would be possible; it started with the fact that he had *no* empirical observation of ghosts and wanted to see if he could confront the subject through a thought experiment. If a reader overlooks the inherent irony of the comparison, the analogy to the theory of gravitation makes it appear as though the theory of spirit-seeing was similarly deduced from observation and has the same force of natural law. Kant's imitation of an "academic" tone may have been too convincing, as it was this point about the theory of

gravitation that upset Moses Mendelssohn the most and prompted him to write in his 1767 review of the *Träume* that it was unclear here whether Kant meant to discredit metaphysics or support spirit-seeing.[142] For Mendelssohn, associating spirit-seeing with the authority of Newton certainly suggested the latter.

Mendelssohn may have been scandalized by what Kant wrote in the *Träume*, but Kant was equally scandalized by Mendelssohn's reception of the text, and he quickly protested that none of the points to which Mendelssohn objected were meant to be taken seriously. Before publishing his later review, Mendelssohn wrote his critiques personally to Kant, who responded in a letter dated April 8, 1766, that "diese Erdichtung [...] kann niemals auch nur einen Beweis der Möglichkeit zulassen" of spirit-seeing.[143] He continues:

> mein Versuch von der Analogie eines wirklichen sittlichen Einflusses der geistigen Naturen mit der allgemeinen Gravitation ist eigentlich nicht eine ernstliche Meinung von mir sondern ein Beispiel wie weit man und zwar ungehindert in philosophischen Erdichtungen fortgehen kann wo die *data* fehlen.[144]

Kant specifically refers to section I.2 of the *Träume* here as an "Erdichtung"—as a fiction or fabrication, meant to serve as an example of the consequences of cavalier and unscrupulous thinking. Earlier in the text he had promised to frighten the thinker who ventured down the wrong path, and here he delivers on that promise, showing "wie weit man [...] fortgehen kann." In Part II, Kant uses the negative example of Swedenborg to make clear that he does not support the ideas suggested in I.2, but many readers—Mendelssohn included—evidently found the

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[142] Moses Mendelssohn, "Kant's Träume eines Geistersehers," in *Gesammelte Schriften. Jubiläumsausgabe*, ed. Eva J. Engel et al. (Stuttgart, 1971), 5.2:73

[143] Immanuel Kant, "Brief an Moses Mendelssohn, April 8, 1766," Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 10, ed. Berlin Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, G. Reimer, 1900).

[144] "Brief an Moses Mendelssohn"

"philosophische Erdichtungen" compelling enough that they were convinced Kant believed them. The *Träume*, insofar as it incorporates a prolonged sequence of suspended assumptions, bears resemblance to prevalent eighteenth-century ghost stories and reveals an inherent risk of this shared technique: that when one asks the reader to create a space for the ostensibly supernatural by suspending his or her normal worldview and beliefs, there is a chance that the resolution of that suspense will prove less compelling than the thrilling experience of dwelling in it. When a text reveals its argument indirectly by temporarily guiding readers down a false path, there is no guarantee that all who follow the detour will navigate a successful return.

Even if the ideas proposed in I.2 do not inform Kant's later philosophy and were never intended to be taken seriously, the section can be read as a meta-commentary on the *Träume*'s technique; I.2 offers an image or metaphor for the temporary submission of a reader to the foreign directives of a text intended to foster the production of insights and perceptions. Mendelssohn and others were duped by the "Erdichtungen" of that section because they did what they, as readers, had been asked to do—they journeyed on the false path that Kant was exploring, engaging with the progression of thought that the text outlined. To follow along with the text, one has to mirror its maneuvers in one's own thinking; in a sense, one has to translate the suggestions of the text into a sequence of internal thoughts, participating in the process by making the thought one's own. In this case, Kant and his text act as precisely the sort of "fremde Wille" that he describes crossing the boundary from the *Geisterwelt* into the individual subject; the suggestions of the text act as a foreign influx that instigate a set of actions (as thoughts) in the reader. Spirit-seeing becomes implicitly analogous to reading, with the author and his text serving as the influx of a foreign will that acts at a distance upon the interior life of the reader. The fact that someone like Mendelssohn was disturbed by this process demonstrates the efficacy

and potency of that textual influx regardless of its fictional or immaterial nature. As Kant had hoped would happen, Mendelssohn was frightened and shocked by the apparition that appeared before him—the fantastical consequences of the ungrounded and cavalier thoughts of speculative metaphysics. Mendelssohn seems to have missed, however, the disawoval of those ideas in Part II of the *Träume*, which testifies to the absurdity of all supernatural apparitions, and by association, to the faults of speculative metaphysics.

The Exposed Supernatural and the Usefulness of Deception

Since Mendelssohn and others were evidently confused by the *Träume's* ultimate stance on spirit-seeing, one has to wonder if any of them actually read Part II, in which Kant clearly renounces ghost theories as fiction. Dispensing altogether with conjectural musings, Kant addresses the specific example of Swedenborg's spirit-seeing. Though he claims to present these stories "mit völliger Gleichgültigkeit dem geneigten oder ungeneigten Urteile der Leser" (*TG* 354), he also evidently assumes that his readers will not judge Swedenborg favorably. He actually apologizes to the reader for telling these stories about Swedenborg at all:

> Man wird vermutlich fragen, was mich doch immer habe bewegen können, ein so verachtetes Geschäfte zu übernehmen, als dieses ist, Märchen weiter zu bringen, die ein Vernünftiger Bedenken trägt, mit Geduld anzuhören, ja solche gar zum Text philosophischer Untersuchungen zu machen. (*TG* 356)

This is not an equivocating or indifferent statement. Kant equates Swedenborg's accounts of spirit-seeing to "Märchen" and declares them an inappropriate subject for the reasonable mind or for philosophical inquiry. The implied question—why would Kant bother to consider such an unsuitable topic—revisits the question of usefulness posed at the start of the text. If theories and accounts of ghosts are not only fictional, but completely useless, why bother composing a text like the *Träume*? By ending the period of suspended disbelief and exposing his opinion of

Swedenborg—which he assumes to be self-evident and accepted by all reasonable people—Kant calls into question not only the usefulness of ghost stories, but also the usefulness of his undertaking in the *Träume* as a whole.

The usefulness that the *Träume* has for Kant can be identified in its characterization of ghosts as corollary fictions of speculative metaphysics, and in the opportunity thereby presented to discredit that philosophical system. By temporarily suspending his strong disbelief in ghosts and spirit-seeing, Kant used the terms of speculative metaphysics in Part I to define the *Geist* and to conjecture about the possibility of seeing one. Creating the space for these "Märchen" of apparitions and spirit-seeing afforded him an opportunity to establish connections and analogues between speculative metaphysical doctrines and (what were intended to be) absurd corollary conjectures about spiritual apparitions. In Part II, he speaks about the connections between spirit-seeing and speculative metaphysics as though they were self-evident:

> Allein da die Philosophie, welche wir voranschickten, ebensowohl ein Märchen war aus dem Schlaraffenlande der Metaphysik, so sehe ich nichts Unschickliches darin, beide in Verbindung auftreten zu lassen. (*TG* 356)

Kant treats the connection as self-evident, but that connection was actually established by him in Part I one of the *Träume*. Because the *Geist* could be defined and also, in a sense, conjured in metaphysical terms, metaphysics becomes, like spirit-seeing, a "Märchen," relegated to an intellectual "Schlaraffenland." After reassuming the disbelief in Swedenborg that he had temporarily suspended, Kant capitalizes on his efforts to demonstrate that spirit-seeing is absurd, using them to effectively discredit metaphysics.

Kant's argument in the *Träume* therefore relies, as Karl Vorländer intimated, on how the text unfolds; specifically, it depends on the sequence of the two Parts and on the use of suspense in Part I to facilitate a consideration of the *Geist*'s existence. Had Kant begun the *Träume* with a

polemic rejection of spirit-seeing and Swedenborg, he would never have had the chance to establish the *Geist* as a corollary of speculative metaphysics. Kant finds value in explaining or debunking the *Geist* only after it has *appeared*, vested in particular philosophical doctrines. In this way, the *Träume* is structured analogously to a story of the explained supernatural and to a phantasmagoria show, in which a magic lantern creates spectral apparitions for an audience. The thrill of a ghost story and the magic of a phantasmagoria show arise from the initial credibility of the ostensibly supernatural phenomena; only after the audience has willingly suspended its disbelief is the phenomenon explained and the trick revealed. In the *Träume*, the *Geist* is conjured via definition, and this ghost of speculative metaphysics serves the purpose that an apparition would have in a ghost story or phantasmagoria. For many readers of the *Träume*—including Moses Mendelssohn—the shock of beholding the *Geist* had a profound effect. What these readers evidently missed was the text's second maneuver, when Kant tries to alleviate that shock by revealing the secret of the ruse: that his explanation of spirit-seeing was strictly fictional the whole time, and any system of thought that could support it must be similarly ungrounded.

It can be troubling to recognize that the *Träume* presents a compelling apparition before offering a revealing explanation, as this technique relies heavily on an effective act of deception. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, Simon During has shown that throughout the 18th century, the rise of phantasmagoria shows and similar cultural phenomena happened in conjunction with a shift towards "secular magic," by which he means "magic" that has a self-consciously illusory quality. When such "secular magic" was practiced, During notes, the audience typically anticipated their own deception; though they choose to participate in the thrill of the experience by suspending their disbelief, they were unlikely to treat the apparently

supernatural as genuine. Richard Alewyn's observations on the transitional nature of 18th century culture serve as a reminder that such an incredulous attitude to the supernatural was not yet the norm. The *Träume* was not written against a cultural backdrop that considered spirit-seeing false by default, which makes the sequence in which the text unfolds inherently more deceptive. Though Kant makes subtle use of irony to undercut his theories about spirit-seeing in Part I, he acknowledges that he has adopted an unorthodox (and possibly misleading) approach in the *Träume*:

> Ich kann es dem behutsamen Leser auf keinerlei Weise übelnehmen, wenn sich im Fortgange dieser Schrift einiges Bedenken bei ihm gereget hätte über das Verfahren, das der Verfasser vor gut gefunden hat, darin zu beobachten. (*TG* 357-358)

By relying on suspended disbelief to establish the necessary associations between spirit-seeing and speculative metaphysics, Kant constructs a text that initially withholds and conceals its truth from the reader. He acknowledges that scrupulous readers may deem this a questionable philosophical method.

Kant justifies his deception by returning one final time to the question of usefulness. In the most direct admission of his deceitful methodology, Kant also remarks decisively on his reason for it: "Ich habe meinem Leser hintergegangen, damit ich ihm *nütze*" (*TG* 368). Ultimately, the *Träume* contributes to the discourse on ghosts by identifying a productive use for the *Geist* as a semiotic textual figure. The figure of the ghost makes it possible for Kant to execute the intellectual maneuver at the heart of the *Träume*, which calls into question the tenets of speculative metaphysics and initiates what would eventually become the project of his critical philosophy. Kant's explanation resonates with language that Stefan Andriopoulos uses to describe a shift in the use of magic lanterns during the second half of the eighteenth century: "the magic lantern's open display in scientific demonstrations was gradually supplanted by its use for

the *back projection* of phantasmagorical images," which capitalized on its "deceptive power" (my emphasis).[145] As the use of magic lantern shifts, the machine moves from the front of the screen to the back; Kant similarly goes behind his reader's back [*hintergehen*] in order to present his own version of a phantasmagoric display, a blend of metaphysics and spirit-seeing that the reader is first drawn to, then encouraged to reject. Both the *Träume* and the magic lantern show are intentionally *arranged* to preserve the compelling encounter with ostensibly supernatural phenomena. The *Träume* does not actually try to exclude the *Geist*, but makes seeing that apparition a necessary part of an unfolding sequence.

Recalling the theory of ghost-seeing that Kant outlined in I.2, one again finds that this contested portion of the *Träume* offers an apt metaphor for how the text, as foreign influx, seeks to stimulate thought within its readers. If the reader plays along with the phantasmagoric theories of ghostly apparition in I.2, then the disavowal of those ideas in Part II will lead the reader to self-reflect: to what extent is he or she susceptible to these intellectual flights of fancy? Though the impetus to think such thoughts came from a foreign will—namely, from the text itself—the reader has participated in a journey down the false path. The encounter with the textual ghost has shaped his or her thinking as though acting upon it from within.

In Part II, Kant encourages the reader to abandon conjectural thinking by outlining two unequal communities in his audience: those who continue to be fooled by the absurdities of metaphysics/spirit-seeing, and those who are reasonable enough to know better. He claims at one point that he is reluctant to share all of the details about Swedenborg, not only because "[er sei] es müde die wilden Hirngespinste des ärgsten Schwärmers unter allen zu copiren," but also because a "Natursammler" who includes "Mißgeburten" alongside his examples "die in

[145] Andriopoulos (2011), 44-45.

natürlicher Form gebildet sind" must be careful about showing his full collection: "denn es könnten unter den Vorwitzigen leichtlich schwangere Personen sein, bei denen es einen schlimmen Eindruck machen dürfte" (*TG* 366). This remark invites readers to question whether they are among that impressionable bunch with whom Kant hesitates to share the "freakish" example of Swedenborg. Kant knows that "da unter meinen Lesern einige in Ansehung der idealen Empfängnis eben sowohl in andern Umständen sein mögen" (*TG* 366). By distinguishing two types of readers, favoring one and articulating contempt for the other, Kant attempts to regulate readers' critical self-reflection and curb their receptivity to conjectural philosophy.

In this way, Kant also identifies the topic of ghost-seeing as a useful and regulative test for readers, whom he does not deem lost even if they have strayed from the "behutsam" path. Kant never writes of his "leichtlich schwangere" readers as though he is addressing them directly—never points his finger at the person reading the text in a given moment. He suggests that such readers exist, but offers each individual the opportunity to reshape his or her thinking and subjective response to the text so as not to be part of that naïve group. The individual reader of the text is the "behutsamen Leser," (*TG* 357) a sane and reasonable individual like the "Natursammler," who is similarly described as "behutsam" (*TG* 366). When, in I.2, Kant makes the decision to depart from reason and explore the possibilities of ghostly apparition more freely, he complains about having to use "die behutsame Sprache der Vernunft" (*TG* 333). Throughout the *Träume,* Kant subtly maps out a region defined by this concept of *Behutsamkeit* and induces in the reader the desire to belong to it, lest she/he become the subject of mockery. The *Träume* ultimately advocates a self-motivated adjustment of readers' own thinking and a departure from an inclination that might tempt them to be drawn in by speculative metaphysics and spiritualism.

Though Kant calls the description of ghostly apparitions in I.2 a philosophical "Erdichtung"—a fact that Lilliane Weissberg takes as a clear indication that Kant is relegating the ghost to the realm of fiction—ghosts are not actually excluded from this realm of *Behutsamkeit* in the *Träume*. Kant challenges his reader to interrogate and ultimately discredit the assumptions of speculative metaphysics, but arriving at that point necessarily entails an encounter with a spectral re-presentation of those philosophical doctrines. The ghost cannot be excluded from reason, as it has been rendered useful by reason—instrumentalized and integrated into the reasoning process itself. There is no way to arrive at the conclusions of the *Träume* without a detour into the *Geisterwelt*. Though the ghostly apparition may stand right on the boundary between *Behutsamkeit* and foolishness, the *Träume* ultimately claims it as a deceptive but potent regulative figure, one who can shape the beholder's thoughts as though from within. A ghost may be a fiction, but the Träume identifies that fiction as a useful stimulant of thought.

Conclusion

It would take roughly 15 years from when he wrote the *Träume* for Kant to publish the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the text that more famously began the work of his critical philosophy and became his enduring contribution to the history of Western philosophy and thought. Though he would never return explicitly to the topic of ghosts and ghost-seeing, his efforts to instrumentalize ghosts in the generation of meaningful cognitive activity resonates strongly with other thinkers' approaches to the supernatural in the late Enlightenment. In the intervening years, between 1766 and 1781, the relationship of Enlightenment culture to the supernatural would continue to undergo drastic shifts. Eberhard, Nicolai and Hennings (among others) began in earnest to challenge old supernatural beliefs through various publications, including articles in

the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* like the one on the *Weisse Frau*, discussed in chapter one, and books such as Hennings' famous *Von Geistern und Geistersehen* (1780). The 1770's saw a craze for *Gespensterballade* in the context of the *Sturm und Drang* movement and began thereby to introduce supernatural themes more strongly into literature; Goethe was interested in but also critical of this craze, and his engagement with it initiated a long-standing investment in the problem of supernatural aesthetics, which will be explored in chapter five. He shared concerns with Schiller, who in his unfinished novel *Der Geisterseher* explores the problems that come with instrumentalizing the supernatural in an attempt to lead a subject towards Enlightenment. Schiller's work can be read as perhaps the most direct response to Kant's, as it deals specifically with the possibility of deception that arises when suspense is used in the context of reason—as it is in Part 1 of the *Träume*.

Before arriving at Schiller's critique of the instrumentalization of the supernatural, however, the next chapter offers a different take on the analogy between ghost-seeing and the act of reading. Karl Philipp Moritz, in his text *Fragmente aus dem Tagebuch eines Geistersehers*, explores this topic, but casts it in a different light than Kant's *Träume*. As elaborated earlier, I.2 of the *Träume* offers a fictitious description of spirit-influxes, which can serve, nevertheless, as an apt analogy for how a text might affect or regulate its readers' thought processes; the text enters the reader's mind like the influx of a foreign will, causing him to arrive at new insights and epiphanies as though they originated autonomously. In Moritz's *Fragmente*, the influx does not come from the spiritual world toward the reader; rather, the reader moves towards the soul of another person and towards the spiritual world itself through the process of reading. Suspense, in this context, does not function as a tool for manipulating or directing the reader, but as a means of opening up a space that creates the potential for some form of higher knowledge—what

Michael Voges calls an "occult Enlightenment." Though somewhat anomalous when compared with both Kant and Schiller, Moritz's take on ghost-seeing and its relationship to art articulates an important counter-perspective that will resurface in Goethe. In his *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*, Goethe blends Schiller's critique with Moritz's optimism about the illuminating potential of a supernatural encounter.

CHAPTER THREE:
SONNENMETAPHORIK AND *ABENDMETAPHORIK*:
THE SUPERNATURAL AESTHETICS OF KARL PHILIPP MORITZ'S *FRAGMENTE AUS DEM TAGEBUCH EINES GEISTERSEHERS*

Even when one denies the reality of the supernatural, an ostensible encounter with it can produce a strong affective response. In Richard Alewyn's assessment, the intellectual and affective responses to supernatural phenomena were in particular conflict during the transitional period of the eighteenth century. Intellectually, many Enlightenment thinkers disavowed all belief in the supernatural; but Alewyn observes that this renunciation of superstitious consciousness was such a recent development that strong feelings of fear and dread continued to arise in response to seemingly supernatural occurrences. "I do not believe in ghosts, but I am afraid," writes Madame du Deffand, summarizing the conflict between her intellectual and affective responses. For eighteenth century aesthetic theorists in both Germany and England, the persistence of strong affective responses to supernatural fiction raised theoretical and practical questions.[146] Should the supernatural be depicted in art, or did it excite emotional responses that were potentially unhealthy and unsuitable for an Enlightened audience? Furthermore, when the supernatural was depicted, why did it prove so attractive to audiences? While some saw the affective potency of ghostly apparitions as problematic, others such as Immanuel Kant, in his *Träume eines Geistersehers*, understood it to be part of a ghost's usefulness as a regulative figure of thought.

[146] Cf. the overview section of the introduction on "Overview of Ghosts and Ghost Stories in the Eighteenth Century."

It is not surprising to find explorations of the conflicted encounter between Enlightenment subject and ostensibly supernatural phenomena in the work of Karl Philipp Moritz (1756-1793), who took a considerable interest in human affect and psychology throughout his career as a writer, teacher and thinker. During the 1770's and 1780's, Moritz studied human affect by carefully documenting psychological case studies, and by authoring fictionalized accounts of characters' inner lives and development. His work in the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, which reported on various forms of aberrant human psychology including suicides and schizophrenics, became foundational to the study of empirical psychology. His most famous novel, *Anton Reiser*, is a precursor of the *Bildungsroman* genre that documents the inner life of a young man as he grows towards adulthood. Unlike his successor, Wilhelm Meister, Anton fails to socialize or ultimately become a *gebildeter Mensch*, but Moritz's novel prefigures a *Bildungsroman* insofar as it documents Anton's private emotional and psychological journey as well as his public life and career. Part of that emotional journey involves wrestling with fears elicited by the *Ammenmärchen* that his nurse tells him; as part of his maturation process, he must decide whether to believe in these *Märchen* and deal with his feelings of fear and dread towards them.

In one of his lesser-known texts, an experimental and unfinished novel *Fragemente aus dem Tagebuch eines Geistersehers*[147] (written 1786, published 1787), Moritz thematizes ghost-seeing more explicitly but ultimately transitions away from the typical affective responses of fear and dread; instead, he suggests the possibility of attaining what Michael Voges calls "occult

[147] All references to the work of Karl Philipp Moritz in this chapter refer to the Deutscher Klassiker Verlag edition and will be henceforth cited in parentheses according to the following format (*W* [page #]): Karl Philipp Moritz, *Werke in zwei Bänden*, (Frankfurt am Main, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2002).

Enlightenment"[148] through willing and open encounter with the supernatural. As Moritz's depiction of ghost-seeing resembles initiation in the *Fragmente*, many scholars have considered it alongside the *Andreas Hartknopf* novels[149] or in the broader context of Moritz's writings on Freemasonry.[150] This approach, however, tends to emphasize the *Fragmente*'s essayistic sections, privileging the philosophical content and overlooking its qualities as a piece of literature. By contrast, this chapter treats the *Fragmente* as a fundamentally literary text and substantiates the teasingly brief suggestion made by both Jan Völker[151] and Patrick Bridgwater[152] that it belongs in the lineage of the "ghost-seer" novels, the most famous example of which is Schiller's *Der Geisterseher*, discussed in detail in the next chapter of this dissertation. The *Fragmente* models a different type of ghost story than the one popularized in *Der Geisterseher*. In the *Fragmente*, *Geistersehen* presents more than a frightening or problematic illusion; as a form of *übernaturlich* vision, it instead becomes associated with higher knowledge. The *Fragmente* folds the supernatural into its depiction of expanded human knowledge by departing from immersive forms of linear narrative; the conditioned fear response associated with

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[148] Cf. Michael Voges, *Aufklärung und Geheimnis: Untersuchungen zur Vermittlung von Literatur- und Sozialgeschichte am Beispiel der Aneignung des Geheimbundmaterials im Roman des späten 18. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1987).

[149] See especially Hans Joachim Schimpf, "Nachwort" in Karl Philipp Moritz, *Andreas Hartknopf, eine Alegorie, 1786. Andreas Hartknopfs Prediger-Jahre, 1790. Fragmente aus dem Tagebuch eines Geistersehers*, *1787*, edited by Hans Joachim Schimpf (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1968).

[150] See for example, Chenxi Tang, "Figuration of Universal History: from Freemasonry to Aesthetics," in *Karl Philipp Moritz: Signaturen des Denkens* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010): 293-304.

[151] Patrick Bridgwater, *The German Gothic Novel in Anglo-American Perspective* (New York: Rodopi, 2013), 180.

[152] Jan Völker, *Ästhetik der Lebendigkeit: Kants dritte Kritik* (Paderborn: Wihelm Fink, 2011), 72 (see footnote 254).

suspenseful ghost stories is bypassed, due to the experimental nature of Moritz's text. The tension that drives the text arises from the contrast of its *Abend-* and *Sonnenmetaphoriks*, but the recurrence of this imagery references backwards even as it pushes forward, thereby encouraging readers to consider each *Metaphorik* as a whole or as seen from an *Überblick* perspective. I argue that the *Fragmente* essentially equates this kind of *Überblick* perspective with an *übernaturlich* one, suggesting an analogy between the acts of reading and of *Geistersehen*.

Textual Background and Scholarship

An anonymous review from 1787 characterizes the *Fragmente aus dem Tagebuch eines Geistersehers* as "nichts, als eine Zusammenhäufung kleiner Aufsätze über Leben, Tod, Menschenelend, Menschenglück, Bestimmung, Zeugung, Zusammenhang, Wirksamkeit."[153] One may attribute the undertone of exasperation in this catalogue of broad and complex themes to the curious and potentially infuriating nature of the text. "Das heißt doch schwärmen! Und zu welchem Nutzen!" continues the reviewer, perplexed by the contradictory ideas espoused in the various "Aufsätze" contained in the work. If the text has a plot, it is (perhaps understandably) unmentioned here; the *Fragmente* is indeed an experimental text with minimal action to speak of. It blends numerous textual forms, including letters, essays and verse, and positively overflows with complicated ideas.

Though it combines a range of textual styles, the *Fragmente* can be accurately categorized as a short epistolary novel, comprised of five letters written by an unnamed writer to an unnamed recipient or recipients. For ease, I will use masculine pronouns when referring to the

[153] Cf. the review of Moritz's *Fragmente aus dem Tagebuch eines Geistersehers* from the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, No 273b, November 14th, 1787, pp. 413-415.

letter-writer, but even this is arbitrary, for so little is known about him from the text itself. Almost no effort has been made by scholars to interpret the few textual clues that tell us anything about him, beyond identifying him as a Werther-like figure with a taste for Ossian, a deep appreciation for the natural world, and a love for the simple lives of village folk.[154] A few dates on early letters place the action during the summer of 1782, but the later letters are undated, and it is difficult to tell exactly how much time has passed between them. The primary action, such as it is, centers around an encounter between the letter-writer (or narrator), and a shepherd boy whose father has recently passed away. Every morning, the boy looks towards the sunrise, where he claims to see the spirit of his deceased father. He also has some papers that his father left behind for him and in which the narrator discovers surprisingly wise and esoteric writings. The narrator feels an immediate connection with this boy and with the spirit of the deceased father and becomes preoccupied with learning everything he can about them. He also becomes obsessed with getting his hands on the father's papers, excerpts of which he then transcribes into his own letters; these are the "Aufsätze" referred to in the review above.

The *Fragmente*'s 1787 publication date may mislead those familiar with Moritz's life and career, who might inaccurately infer that he produced the piece during his Italian Journey (1786-1788) while befriending Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. This significant caesura in Moritz's life constituted a major turning point in his thinking on history and aesthetics, so it would be enticing to read the *Fragmente* as a production of that pivotal period. One might even imagine that the encounter with Goethe influenced the text, particularly as the *Fragmente* and Goethe's *Unterredungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* exhibit similar approaches to the supernatural, as will be shown in the final chapter of this dissertation focusing on Goethe's work. The reality is that

[154] Cf. Schimpf 46.

by the time Moritz left for Italy, he had written everything he was going to write on the *Fragmente*. This explains the sarcastic "Vorrede des Verlegers," which seems to have been written by Moritz's publisher, Himburg. In it, Himburg pointedly and somewhat bitterly remarks that Moritz did not bother to complete the text that was promised: "[dieser Schrift sollte] anfänglich 16 Bogen stark werden und [findet] sich nun auf die Hälfte gebracht" (*W* 1:702). Referring to Moritz's sudden and unexpected trip to Italy, Himburg goes on to suggest that, perhaps someday, the author will find it worth his while to complete the text:

> Wenn der Verfasser einstens seinen vaterländischen Boden wieder betreten sollte und die Sirocco's keinen widrigen Einfluß auf ihn gemacht haben, so wird er sich für Geld und gute Worte wohl zureden lassen, diese Materie fortzusetzen." (*W* 1:702)

In a later essay from 1789 ("Über eine Schrift des Herrn Schulrath Campe, und über die Rechte des Schriftstellers und Buchhändlers"), Moritz refers to this sarcastic prologue and the unexpected publication of the *Fragmente*, reporting that Himburg evidently published the text because he simply didn't know what else to do; Moritz had titled the work "Fragmente," and Himburg published what he had, unsure of whether or not Moritz ever intended to return to it.[155] Moritz's friend, posthumous editor, and eventual biographer, Karl Friedrich Klischnig, claims that Moritz "hatte [...] einen sehr herrlichen Plan dazu, an dessen Ausarbeitung auch ich Theil nehmen sollte."[156] This planned collaboration, however, was never carried out.

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[155] "Er [Joachim Heinrich Campe] sagt, derselbe [Himburg] habe eine Schrift von mir, die ich nicht meinem Versprechen gemäß vollendet, als Grament herausgeben müssen, da disese Schrift doch von mir selbst auf dem Titel nicht anders als Fragmente genannt worden ist." Cf. Karl Philipp Moritz, *Ueber eine Schrift des Herrn Schulrath Camps, und über die Rechte des Schriftstellers und Buchhändlers*, (Berlin 1789): 16.

[156] Karl Friedrich Klischnig, *Meine Freund Anton Reiser. Aus dem Leben des Karl Philipp Moritz,* edited by Heide Hollmer and Kirsten Erwentraut (Berlin: Gatza, 1992).

Whether or not Moritz and Klischnig really planned to complete the *Fragmente* together, Himburg's confusion about the status of the test is understandable; not only did Moritz's title suggest that the work was intended as a fragment, he had also previously published numerous formally experimental, fragmentary works that presented pieces of fictional letters and diaries like those comprising the *Fragmente*. As early as 1780, in the *Beiträge zur Philosophie des Lebens aus dem Tagebuch eines Freimäurers*, Moritz experimented with pseudo-diaries and epistolary forms in his fictional works. Alexsander Kosenina identifies these texts as Moritz's "Probeübungen zu seiner empirischen-literarischen Psychologie"[157]—they are texts that explore human psychology by constructing and observing the subjective reflections of fictional characters. Though Moritz scholarship has long recognized the close links between the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* and Moritz's most famous novel *Anton Reiser*—thereby implicitly recognizing the close kinship of empirical psychology and the *Bildung* genre—Kosenina observes that this study of human nature through fiction, this experimental use of literature as a kind of psychological laboratory, extends to Moritz's lesser-known works and to the *Fragmente aus dem Tagebuch eines Geistersehers*, specifically.[158]

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[157] Alexsander Kosenina, "'Die Universität was die Klippe, an welcher er scheiterte'. Karl Philipp Moritz' Erzählung *Aus K…s Papieren*" in *Prägnanter Moment: Studien zur deutschn Literatur der Aufklärung und Klassik, Festschrift für Hans-Jürgen Schings*, edited by Peter-André Alt, Alexander Kosenina, Hartmut Reinhart, and Wolfgang Ridel (Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann: 2002), 127.

[158] Kosenina's essay in *Prägnanter Moment* focuses primarily on the story *Aus K…s Papieren*, which was originally published in pieces in the *Denkwürdigkeiten, aufgezeichnet zur Beförderung des Edlen und Schönen* (1786). The Deutscher Klassiker Verlag edition of Moritz's works in which both this story and the *Fragmente* are included notes that there are indeed close similarities between the *Fragmente* and the texts published in the *Denkwürdigkeiten*, suggesting that both were in fact completed around the same time (see *W* 1:1228). Kosenina has in general been the leading scholar on Moritz's earlier, lesser-known experimental works (see *Karl Philipp Moritz: Literarische Experimente auf dem Weg zum psychologischen Roman* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006), but the *Fragmente* fall at an awkward spot in Moritz's career for him;

The problem with folding elements of empirical psychology into these experimental pieces of literature—and this is true, to some extent, in all of Moritz's work, including *Anton Reiser*—is that it invites more biographical and philosophical interpretation than literary analysis. Nowhere is this more evident perhaps than in Klischnig's biography, which fully melds the identity of his friend, Moritz, with the identity of his friend's character, Anton Reiser; he even names the biography of Moritz, *Mein Freund Anton Reiser*. Some of the scholarship on *Anton Reiser* has resisted the simple conflation of Moritz and the novel's narrator/title-character, but the prevailing tendency when it comes to the *Fragmente* is still to overlook the fundamentally literary quality of the work. It does not seem that critics have moved much beyond Klischnig's assertion that the *Fragmente* is "bloß ein Vehikel um gewisse Ideen leichter unter die Leute zu bringen."[159] That idea has implicitly endured even into Eliot Schreiber's recent book-length study of Moritz, where he cites a sentence from the *Fragmente* as evidence for his central thesis. Arguing that Moritz developed an understanding of the work of art that demonstrates its "incommensurability in relation to [the sublime whole]," Schreiber pulls from the *Fragmente* the following sentence: "das große Ganze ist nicht für uns."[160] This assertion is treated as self-evidently definitive and as clearly attributable to Moritz himself; Schreiber implies what Klischnig would have us believe, that the fiction of the *Fragmente* is a vehicle for Moritz's ideas. But immediately following the statement that Schreiber cites, Moritz's text becomes more complicated:

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because Kosenina focuses on the 1780-1786 period, prior to the Italian Journey, his book leaves out the *Fragemente*, which not published until 1787, even though they were completed earlier.

[159] Klischnig 167.

[160] Eliott Schreiber, *The Topography of Modernity: Karl Philipp Moritz and the Space of Autonomy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2012): 7.

> Aber warum arbeiten sich denn diese Gedanken immer wieder in mir empor, die mich jener seligen Einschränkung, jenem glücklichen, rund umher mit Bergen umgebenen Eilande entreißen, und mich immer wieder auf das weite ungestüme Meer führen, wo ich ohne Steuer und Kompaß auf einem leichten Brette umhertreibe" (*W* 1:729)

Clearly the striving for that "große Ganze" lives on, whether or not it can be attained. Schreiber's citation presents only one side of a passage that is actually full of tension.

This is not to say that Schreiber overlooks the tension between Moritz's desire to attain wholeness and the inability of his art to achieve it; indeed, this tension is the very subject of his book, which takes aim primarily at scholars such as Thomas Saine who have optimistically argued that Moritz's work offers an aesthetic solution, in the ideal of artistic "wholeness,"[161] to the fracturing of modern society.[162] The brief sentence from the *Fragmente* serves its purpose as a provocative counterpoint to this prominent scholarly perspective. But Schreiber's choice to cite this assertion as Moritz's, though it is contextually attributed to a narrator who is not necessarily synonymous with Moritz, demonstrates what is missing from current scholarship on the text. If we consider how the *Fragmente* unfolds as a literary work, we have to develop a more nuanced assessment of a statement like "Das große Ganze ist nicht für uns." It cannot be simply taken as a definitive philosophical statement; rather, we must consider how it reflects the narrator's character, his psychological state and his progression throughout the work.

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[161] Particularly in the 1785 essay *Versuch einer Vereinigung aller schönen Künste und Wissenschaften unter dem Begriff des in sich selbst Vollendeten*. See also Allesandro Costazza's excellent essay unpacking the specific historical-cultural context in which this essay appears, which supports Schreiber's assertions in so far as it demonstrates that Moritz was specifically forwarding the idea of "Vervollkommenheit" in the work of art as a way of contradicting the prevailing notion that "Vergnügen" should, in fact, be the goal of the work of art. "Die anti-psychologisch Ästhetik eines führenden Psychologen des 18. Jahrhunderts" in *Moritz zu ehren: Beiträge zum Eutiner Symposium im Juni 1993*, edited by Wolfgang Griep (Eutin: Struve's Bruchdruckerei und Verlag, 1996): 9-31.

[162] See Thomas Saine, *Die ästhetische Theodizee: Karl Philipp Moritz und die Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Fink, 1971).

Klischnig's biography is not the only precedent for treating the *Fragmente* as a collection of Moritz's ideas. Hans Joachim Schimpf, who edited the first scholarly edition of the *Fragmente* in 1968 and bundled it together with new editions of the *Andreas Hartknopf* novels, treats the text in the same manner: he calls the excerpted essays from Sonnenberg's papers "wichtige spekulative Aufsätze Moritzens," ignoring that these essays are presented as the writings of a differentiated character within the novel fragment.[163] This may stem from the fact that many of these essays were later plucked from their fictional context and reprinted as part of *Die große Loge*. In this new context, it might seem safe to treat these essays as Moritz's thoughts, though this ignores their important structural role within the *Fragmente* as a fictional *Briefroman*. We should remember, after all, that it was Klichnig—the same man who wrote a biography of Moritz and called it *Mein Freund Anton Reiser*—who decided to collect and publish the writings on Freemasonry that make up *Die große Loge*.

In his scholarly edition of the *Hartknopf* texts, Schimpf comments briefly on the *Fragmente,* though he primarily aims to elevate critical valuation of the two novels, which were largely considered secondary to Moritz's greater literary accomplishment, *Anton Reiser,* by the beginning of the twentieth century.[164] Between the 1930's and 1960's, scholars had already begun to reevaluate the *Hartknopf* novels, identifying in them an early figuration of German

[163] See Schimpf 46. Curiously, Schimpf is careful to avoid this pitfall when reading *Andreas Hartknopfs Predigerjahre*, pointing out that assertions made both Klischnig and Johann Christian Conrad have led readers to misunderstand ["verkennen"] the novel and focus purely on the ideas that it contains (49), ignoring their structural function within the plot.

[164] See Schimpf, 15-16. Arno Schmidt similarly decried the lack of attention given to the *Andreas Hartknopf* novels in one of his radio broadcasts from the 1950's (see Arno Schmidt, *Die Schreckensmänner*)

Romanticism.[165] Schimpf's work builds on that foundation by reprinting the novels and providing a comprehensive summary of the scholarly work done thus far. He also includes the *Fragmente*, calling it "jenes bislang als solches unerkanntes Parallelstück zum *Andreas Hartknopf*."[166] In his afterword, he acknowledges the fundamentally literary character of the *Fragmente*, calling it the "Plan eines Briefromans [...] mit dem er die Problematik des *Andreas Hartknopf* noch einmal aufnehmen wollte."[167] He identifies a clear connection between the texts, rooted in the "Sonnenmetaphorik" that figures prominently in each.[168] In the *Fragmente*, the shepherd boy looks to the sunrise every morning in order to see the ghost of his father. During this matin, he perceives a sense of the order and organization of the cosmos that is similarly reflected by Hartknopf's contemplation of the "Morgenröte."[169] Schimpf reads these passages about the esoteric wisdom to be found in the sunrise as "eine Grundmaxime" of Moritz's thought, "die später auch in seiner Ästhetik leitender Gesichtspunkt geblieben ist."[170] He also

[165] See especially: Rudolf Unger, "Zur seelengeschichtlichen Genesis der Romantik. I: Karl Philipp Moritz als Vorläufer von Jean Paul und Novalis," in *Zur Dichtungs- und Geistesgeschichte der Goethezeit* (Berlin: Ges.Studien, 1944): 144-180. Studies relating Moritz to Romanticism continued beyond the 1960's as well, for which see especially: Robert Mühler, *Deutsche Dichter der Klassik und Romantik* (Vienna: Wihelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1976): 79-83.

[166] Schimpf 46.

[167] Ibid. 26.

[168] Ibid. 47.

[169] One can see in this a fairly clear example of the type of statement that provided fodder for Saine's argument for the inherent theodicy of Moritz's work.

[170] Schimpf 47.

connects this *Sonnenmetaphorik* with Freemasonry, which is a central theme in both the *Fragmente* and Moritz's other works.[171]

More central to my study is the way in which the *Sonnenmetaphorik* in the *Fragmente* contrasts with the tone and tropes of more typical ghost stories. To see the spirit of his father, the shepherd boy does not visit his grave or perform a ritual at a more traditional hour for supernatural activity, like midnight. Instead, the imagery of the Enlightenment—the light of the sun, the rising illumination of mind—is applied to the supernatural and the appearance of the apparition.[172] The *Fragmente* does not represent the supernatural as contrary to clear knowledge. The characters are not required to dispel the supernatural in order to arrive at true knowledge of what lies behind it. Instead, Moritz depicts the possibility of knowledge within an esoteric experience of the supernatural—if that experience is approached without fear.

My reading also contests Schimpf's claim that the *Fragmente* offers no counterpoint to this harmonious incorporation of the supernatural into a definition of expanded knowledge: "Dem *Geisterseher* fehlte [...] eine Gegenwelt," Schimpf writes.[173] As such, the *Fragmente* can never be more than an interesting counterpoint to the *Hartknopf* novels, which introduce a

[171] According to Albert Meier, however, Moritz's connection with Freemasonry was superficial at best, and all of the writing that he did on the subject was between 1780 and 1786, even though he remained an active member of the Freemason Lodge in Berlin following his Italian Journey. This would mean that the *Fragmente* was one of the last texts on Freemasonry that he wrote. See "Weise Unerschrokenheit. Zum ideengeschichtlichen Ort von Karl Philipp Moritz' Freimaurer-Schriften," in *Moritz zu ehren: Beiträge zum Eutiner Symposium im Juni 1993*, edited by Wolfgang Griep (Eutin: Eutiner Landesbibliothek und Struve's Buchdrckerei und Verlag, 1996), 95-104.

[172] The boy describes his father as "verklärt," which is fascinating to contemplate as a counterpoint to the idea of something being "aufgeklärt."

[173] Schimpf 49.

central tension by also portraying in certain scenes, "das Gegenspiel der Finsternis."[174] In the *Hartknopf* novels' portrayal of both light and dark, Schimpf identifies a dynamic and literary quality that he finds missing from the unfinished *Fragmente*, which we know others to have vehemently dismissed as nothing more than "schwärmen! Und zu welchem Nutzen?" In contradistinction to Schimpf, my reading of the *Fragmente* argues that the text does contain tension—that there is, in fact, an *Abendmetaphorik* that pushes back against the *Sonnenmetaphorik* as the narrator struggles toward an *Überblick* perspective and the possibility of *Geistersehen*. To discover this tension, one must attend to the literary qualities of the text and treat its various voices as distinct, not automatically synonymous with Moritz's. Doing so reveals that the narrator is a troubled soul, ever in danger of falling victim to ungrounded *Phantasie* and dark thoughts. His disposition is not altogether dissimilar to Werther's, and the *Fragmente* can be understood as a text that attempts to negotiate the potential pitfalls of *Empfindsamkeit* while also refusing to condone the other extreme—a cold or detached form of reason.

The *Abendmetaphorik* of the *Fragmente*

The essential tension of the text arises from the development of two distinctly oppositional metaphoric registers, which Moritz associates with (maybe even personifies in) different characters. The *Abendmetaphorik* in the *Fragmente* is intimately connected with the narrator, and can be identified in the representation of his character and the *mise en scène* of his narrative. While the *Sonnenmetaphorik* originates in the shepherd boy's ritual at sunrise, most of the narrator's reflections, captured in his letters, are staged in the evening or at night. This begins in the opening line of the first letter, dated June 1, 1782: "Wie lieblich scheint die Sonne *am*

[174] Schimpf 49.

Abend in mein kleines Fenster.—Dort auf der Wiese weiden noch die Herden—die einzelnen Eichen werfen ihren langen Schatten jenen Berg hinunter" (*W* 1:703, my emphasis). The evening sun is shining through the narrator's window, which opens on a rural setting; sitting by it, he regards the world as dusk approaches. In contradistinction to the shepherd boy's outdoor matin, Moritz sets the narrator's reflections in an interior location, which reflects an important aspect of his characterization; it is appropriate that the narrator witnesses the world through the mediation of the window, thereby remaining at a distance from it, as the aloof tone and evident erudition of his letters distinguishes him from the shepherds and the farmers that he watches. The late hour further differentiates him from these laborers, whose work is more inextricably linked to daylight:

> Du armer Hirt wirst also in der Reihe denkender Wesen nicht vernachlässiget, nicht vergessen—Dein Rang ist dennoch in der Geisterwelt, ob du gleich den ganze Tag über nur deine Kühe weidest (*W* 1:704).

This pronouncement demonstrates the narrator's evident sense of distance from this shepherd; with authority, if not condescension, he declares that such laborers also have some claim to a place in the spirit world [*Geisterwelt*] even if they do not actively or consciously partake in the life of the mind. These two distinct relationships to the *Geisterwelt* correspond with the text's *Abend-* and *Sonnenmetaphorik.* While the shepherd boy's *Geistersehen* is connected to the sunrise and his lifestyle to daytime activity, the narrator's contemplation occurs in the evening and is associated with the physical inactivity more typical of night.

A distinct *Abendmetaphorik* can be observed in the narrator's point of view. In a text where perspective becomes a crucial aesthetic question, the delimited and distanced frame through which the narrator views the world is significant, as it represents the limited scope of his worldview at the outset. It illustrates his differentiation from the laborers, and by extension, from

the *Sonnenmetaphorik.* Though the narrator is distanced from the lives and activities of those outside, he nevertheless seems to be at home there, and not a visitor. He identifies the shepherd as "der arme Hirt aus *unserem* Dorfe" (*W* 1:703, my emphasis) and later, when speaking of the deceased father, he remarks, "Ich hatte diesen Mann wohl gekannt" (*W* 1:712). This draws him closer to the world of the *Sonnenmetaphorik*, but Moritz further develops the *Adendmetaphorik* in his depiction of the narrator's prevailing mood or state of mind; though he is at home in this village, the narrator's perceptions of darkened evening light through the window have a darkened emotional counterpart. He laments being "so einzeln unter den Menschen, und so verloren," epitomizing the gentle melancholy gloom that pervades the opening letters (*W* 1:703). The text echoes *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, here, though the most explicit allusion comes later, when the narrator references *Ossian*, a key reference-text in Goethe's novel: "Mir fielen, da ich diese Worte las, alle die erhabnen ossianischen Bilder ein" (*W* 1:713). Moritz's attraction to *Werther* has not escaped scholarly attention. The first section of Elliott Schreiber's recent study on Moritz is dedicated to a consideration of "The Sublime *Augenblick*," a concept that he derives through an examination of three separate instances in which Moritz interprets and considers *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*.[175] The importance of that text to Moritz's early career, in particular, has been widely acknowledged, so it is not surprising to find allusions to it in the *Fragmente*. Recognizing the narrator's similarities to Werther helps us understand him and identify him more clearly as a literary construct—a fictional character, not synonymous with Moritz. Furthermore, this character's gloomy melancholy contributes to the text's darker *Metaphorik*.

An additional aspect of the *Abendmetaphorik* develops in inferences pertaining to the narrator's stage of life. Unlike Werther, whose melancholy comes from unrequited love, the

[175] Schreiber 15-34.

narrator's mood seems to result from an unidentified ailment. Vague hints are littered throughout the text that the narrator may be physically ill, or perhaps approaching the "twilight" of his life, thereby embodying another valence of the *Abendmetaphorik.* Though he eventually ventures further out of his house, his first two letters suggest that for nearly two months (the second letter is dated July 24, 1782, almost two months after the first) he does little but sit and look out the window, perhaps because he is convalescing: at the opening of the letter dated July 24, he refers to his "siechen Körper" (*W* 1:705). He goes to write: "ich [will...] öfter zu diesem Anblick meine Zuflucht nehmen, ich darf ja aus meine Wohnung nur wenige Schritte darnach tun" (*W* 1:706). Whether this sedentary observation is necessitated by a physical ailment is not clear. It may simply be symptomatic of the narrator's melancholy that he stays inside, thinking of himself as diseased. He is, however, conspicuously preoccupied with contemplating life after death. At the end of his first letter, after musing on what might happen to a person's soul after the body dies, the narrator asks himself:

> Und ich sollte das Überströmen meines Wesens in ein andres scheuen?—und doch sheue ich es?—Doch ist alles auf einmal so tot, so abgeschnitten, so zerrissen—wenn ich mein Wesen auch mit einem Wesen höherer Art vertauschen sollte. (*W* 1:704).

These could simply be the musings of a thoughtful person considering the various possibilities that await him beyond the grave. Yet there is urgency in the question, an insistence or even desperation that could suggest that, for him, this is a more pressing matter.

The narrator of the *Fragmente* is himself the "Gegenwelt" that Schimpf claims is missing in the text—the *Abendmetaphorik* that complements the *Sonnenmetaphorik* of the boy and his father—and for this reason, any reading that ignores the fictional construction of this character misses something crucial. Though he is intimately connected to the *Abendmetaphorik,* he is not a mere symbol; it is essential to acknowledge him as a constructed character with a developing

interiority that shapes the *Fragmente*'s narrative. Reading any of the narrator's letters as definitive philosophical statements is problematic because he is a character, first and foremost, and his thinking and mood undergo various changes throughout the text. Whether physical or purely mental, the ailments that plague him during his first two letters (from June 1 and July 24/25) are slowly eased as he observes the evident harmony of the natural settings that surround him and meditates on the activity of the farmers harvesting corn. This reorients his perspective and re-grounds his *Phantasie* in something more positive and appropriate:

> Und was war mein Kummer?—war er nicht eben in dieser Verstimmung meiner Phantasie gegründet, die der feste Anblick der mich umgebenden Natur wieder heilte.—Was war es anders, als daß mein Auge den unrechten Gesichtspunkt gefaßt hatte, aus dem ich diese schöne Welt betrachtete, in der ich nun anfing, Verwirrung und Unordnung, Unglück und Jammer zu sehen, wohin ich blickte, und zu ahnden, wohin ich nicht blickte?" (*W* 1:706)

His plight is healed by a shift in perspective and a concomitant adjustment in his imagination (*Phantasie*)—interestingly, these beneficial adjustments occur as his attention draws him closer to the land and the laborers, in contradistinction to which his character was drawn. The narrator's self-regulation in the *Fragmente* evokes a recurrent theme of Moritz's other novels, which often depict the potentially fatal consequences of an unchecked or misdirected imagination. It may even be possible that, in his *Phantasie*, the narrator's contemplation of death arose from a consideration of suicide; in such a reading, this healing reorientation may literally have saved him from fatal consequences.

Developing an *Abendmetaphorik* in the narrator's characterization, Moritz makes some degree of inner conflict inherent to him; it suggests darker aspects to his moods and an unidentified threat to his life and/or health (either physical or mental). The plot, such as it is, depicts this fictional narrator navigating the struggles endemic to his inner nature. Though his voice should be read as a literary construct, it does periodically echo Moritz's non-fiction. The

Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde, for instance, which Moritz began working on in 1783, similarly addressed itself to the regulation of human *Phantasie*. Slightly later in the *Fragmente*, the narrator expresses a thought in language that explicitly recalls Moritz's foreward to the first issue of the *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*: "Wer rettet mich von dieser Fragesucht, die mich so unwillkürlich anwandelt—warum führen meine Gedanken mich in *unübersehbare Labyrinthe*?" (*W* 1:711, my emphasis). Moritz writes here of a labyrinth of thoughts. This is a metaphor that recurs in gothic imagery, and one that Schiller will later use to metaphorically depict the part of the Prince's mind that is drawn to thoughts of ghosts and the supernatural in *Der Geisterseher*—the part of his mind that leaves him susceptible to the manipulations of the Armenian. In the *Fragmente*, Moritz's narrator offers a solution to this problem of the imagination: "ich [will] den Lauf meiner Gedanken hemmen, und meine Sinne dem Genuß der schönen Natur eröffnen" (*W* 1:711).

I acknowledge that many of these citations trend towards supporting the "aesthetic theodicy" of Thomas Saine and others, as the narrator seems to be finding refuge for his confused mind in contemplation of the goodness of his natural surroundings; I also recognize that these words come from the same voice that will later proclaim "Das große Ganze ist nicht für uns," which Schreiber uses to argue *against* theodicy. As asserted before, the narrator's inner conflicts shape the narrative; the philosophical "positions" that the narrator assumes are effectively plot devices, used as a means of establishing intellectual tension that propels the text forward. The first two letters of the *Fragmente* are but the initial movement of a piece that extends beyond them and complicates the perspectives upon which they apparently settle. As if in anticipation of this, the first section of the second letter concludes with a kind of summary statement of the narrator's current position: "Hier bleib ich für jetzt mit meinem Nachdenken

stehen—" he writes, "und ruhe sanft in dem Gedanken, daß ich in der Ordnung der Dinge mit getragen und erhalten werde, worin nur die Formen aber nicht die Bestandteile der Dinge vernichtet werden" (*W* 1:709). This feels like the close of an act, a statement of position made prior to its disruption. It is a statement asking to be overturned.

In examining Moritz's characterization of the narrator, one question remains—does the title aptly refer to him as a *Geisterseher*? The narrator seems to find comfort in his assertion that though the form may die, some essential part of the being lives on; is this supposition of the existence of spirit, however, enough to identify him as a "spirit-seer"? If the narrator is the *Gesiterseher* of the title, does his negative *Phantasie* also constitute a manner of spirit-seeing? The misguided fantasies that plague the narrator and make him unhappy cause him "[zu ahnden] Verwirrung und Unordnung, Unglück und Jammer […], wohin ich nicht blickte." That word *ahnden* (*ahnen*) had popular associations with spirit-seeing in the eighteenth century and might have evoked that idea for many readers; so perhaps "spirit-seeing," here interpreted as the perception of phantoms of misery in the surrounding world, is the thing that plagues that narrator and makes him unhappy. By contrast, the durability of a conscious being beyond the expiration of its physical form comforts the narrator and helps him re-ground his perspective in observation of the natural world; so perhaps the "spirit-seeing" is to be connected with the healing, rather than the ailment. After the second letter, however, a third possibility emerges—that the papers from Sonnenberg, the deceased father of the shepherd boy, are in fact the fragments named in the title, and the narrator is not actually a spirit-seer at all, at least not at first.

A Progressive or a Regressive *Verschmelzung*?

In the first two letters of the *Fragmente*, Moritz develops an *Abendmetaphorik,* folding into it an associated set of qualities including detached erudition, physical inactivity, melancholy, ungrounded *Phantasie*, and impending mortality. As an overall register, the *Abendmetaphorik* connotes more negatively. The *Sonnenmetaphorik* introduced in the third letter, by contrast, connotes positively—though the characters who embody it may be somewhat idealized. In this letter, the narrator begins to perform a blending (*Verschmelzung*) of his voice with that of the shepherd boy's father, Sonnenberg, by transcribing the deceased man's words into his own letters; Sonnenberg effectively becomes a "ghost-writer" of the narrator's letters. Confused textual cues, however, make it challenging for the reader to form a clear judgment of or affective response to this *Verschmelzung*; it may seem like a positive resolution of tension, but might also represent the further devolution of the narrator's consciousness. Is the textual blending of two voices a progressive or regressive action for the narrator? Does the narrator's fascination with Sonnenberg draw him closer to the positive values of the *Sonnenmetaphorik,* or does it deepen his association with the darker *Abendmetaphorik*?

The *Sonnenmetaphorik* that Schimpf sees as central to the text emerges in the third letter, dated July 26, 1782, when the narrator begins to recount the narrative arc involving the shepherd boy and his deceased father. Having resolved to walk up the nearby mountain in the morning, the narrator reports encountering the shepherd boy ("Hirtenknabe") lying in the grass and "blickte starr *in die aufgehende Sonne*" (*W* 1:712, my emphasis), claiming to see his father there every morning in the light of the rising sun: "Er hat mir immer gesagt, ich sollte des Morgens früh in die Sonne blicken, da würde ich ihn wiedersehn, wenn er gestorben wäre" (*W* 1:712). The narrator knew the man, who had indeed died recently, and identifies him as "ein Schwärmer" (*W*

1:712) who could read and write better than the other residents of the village. Despite his reservations about the man—"Schwärmer" being hardly a compliment—the narrator becomes absolutely astounded after reading some of the man's papers, which the boy pulled from his bag that morning. On them, he discovers a set of wise and esoteric writings, and he becomes driven to learn as much as he can about the deceased man. The *Sonnenmetaphorik* acquires associations here that directly contrast the *Abendmetaphorik* analyzed earlier. The *Sonnenmetaphorik*'s dual connection to *Schwärmerei* and to esoteric wisdom contrasts with the narrator's dual characterization as erudite and prone to *Phantasie*. While evening becomes a metaphor for the narrator's stage of life, the sunrise is here associated with youthful innocence (through the boy) and afterlife (through the father).

If the narrator exemplifies the *Fragmente*'s *Abendmetaphorik*, the shepherd boy's father most fully embodies the *Sonnenmetaphorik*. Little is known about his past, except that he came to the village some time ago and purchased a small bit of land where he lived with his son. His closest relationship was with the shepherd, who now raises the man's son and seems to know more about him than anyone else. The man called himself Sonnenberg—a clearly allegorical name that also connects him to the *Sonnenmetaphorik*—and had, as the narrator discovers, a book collection that included Homer, Ossian, Milton, Horace, Geßner and Rousseau. The narrator learns that he left many other papers behind, most of which he is not allowed to see, as they are protected by the shepherd according to a ritualistic set of rules that seem akin to those of a secret society:

> Hinter den Büchern lag eine Anzahl Blätter […] Und in eine Ecke stand ein verschloßnes eisernes Kästchen, zu welchem sein Sohn den Schlüssel aus den Händen des Schäfers nicht her erhalten sollte, als bis er mündig wäre, stürbe er, so sollte das Kästchen mit ihm begraben werden […] Die zusammengebundnen Blätter waren dazu bestimmt, daß sein Sohn eins nach dem andern eine gewisse

> Zeit in der Tasche tragen, und es so oft für sich lessen sollte, bis er den Sinn davon gefaßt hätte. (*W* 1:715)

Though it is impossible for him to do so, the narrator becomes preoccupied, if not obsessed, with getting his hands on those papers: "Diese Blätter zu bekommen, dahin ging jetzt alle mein Trachten" (*W* 1:715). Since the shepherd is not allowed to disclose them, however, the narrator must content himself with one book of the man's writing that can be shared. He takes great delight even in this small selection, finding in the pages "einen neuen Busenfreund" that he identifies as "einen *Geisterseher von der edlern Art*" (*W* 1:715). These texts—"ein Teil von den Aufsätzen des Verstorbnen über sich selbst" (*W* 1:715)—are perhaps the true *Fragmente aus dem Tagebuch eines Geistersehers*. The *Sonnenmetaphorik* embodied in Sonnenberg takes on a distinctly esoteric quality, to which the narrator is drawn.

With the introduction of Sonnenberg's writings, Moritz's text becomes complexly layered because of what the narrator decides to do with them: "ich [werde die Aufsätzen] nun meinem Tagebuch über mich selbst, welches ich *dreien Freunden* hinterlasse, mit einverleiben" (*W* 1:715). He intends, in other words, to incorporate Sonnenberg's writings into his own so that they comprise a single corpus. The way he describes it echoes his musings about life after death. By blending his diary with the essays from the deceased man, he effectively simulates a *Verschmelzung* of their two identities, an "Überströmung" of one identity into another. "Wie oft wünschen nicht Seelen hieneiden schon in einander zuschmelzen," he writes when musing about life after death in the first letter, "mit allen ihren Gedanken, allen ihren Erinnerungen, die sie von Kindheit auf hatten, *eins* zu werden" (*W* 1:704). Reading the texts from Sonnenberg and also incorporating them into his own diary essentially makes it possible for the narrator to connect with the spirit world before actually dying, and in that way, become a kind of spirit-seer himself: "Ich will mich nun mit seinem Geiste unterreden," he writes,

> so lange ich noch hienieden walle—bis die Scheidewand in Staub zerfällt, die jetzt mein Wesen noch von dem seinigen trennt und eine undurchdringliche Kluft zwischen uns befestigt (*W* 1:715).

Though the narrator and Sonnenberg correspond to the text's oppositional *Metaphoriks*, a resonance can be observed between them prior to the narrator's active fusion of their two voices. The narrator's letters repeatedly echo images from Sonnenberg's writings, and vice versa. The first excerpt that the narrator reads on the hillside, immediately after meeting the shepherd boy, already exhibits these similarities. Sonnenberg writes:

> Betrachte die Blumen auf dem Felde, wenn du deine Herde weidest, und dann schlage dein Auge wieder in die Höhe, und denke: Himmel und Erde! Und wenn du Himmel und Erde gedacht hast, so betrachte wieder die Blumen auf dem Felde, und die Grashalmen um dich her!

These imperatives that the father passes on to his son recall the narrator's earlier reflections on shepherds' connection with the elevated spirit world [*Geisterwelt*]:

> [Der arme Hirt] glaubt, er weide nur seine Herde—aber er weiß nicht, dass sich unvermerkt der Keim zur Vervollkommnung und Veredlung seines Wesens in ihm—daß jedes Grashälmchen, welches er, ohne Absicht sein Auge an den Boden heftend, betrachtet, seine Kraft zu vergleichen und zu unterscheiden erhöht." (*W* 1:703)

Both men write about how considering [*betrachten*] the details of the surrounding world while out tending one's flocks [*Herde*] strengthens the individual's ability to think and be discerning. They even employ the same example, inviting their audiences to consider the blade of grass [*Grashalm / Grashälmchen*] specifically. The narrator also recognizes the similarity: "Was heißt das [Sonnenberg's writings] anders, als gewöhne deinen Geist beim *Einzelnen das Ganze und in dem Ganzen stets das Einzelne zu denken!*" (italics in the original, indicating the narrator's direct citation of his earlier letter, *W* 1:713). Even before he resolves to begin incorporating Sonnenberg's writings into his own, there is evidence of a blending and unification of their thoughts.

It is difficult to discern whether the narrator's excitement in recognizing his resonance with Sonnenberg stimulates his *Phantasie* or indicates his discovery of a compatible mentor; the evident similarity of their thoughts could prove suggestive to the narrator's imagination, causing him to fantasize about their connection. The first two letters focused on the regulation of *Phantasie*, particularly in the face of death; here, it is challenging to discern what type of mental activity this connection with Sonnenberg cultivates. Is the narrator grounded or ungrounded in this connection with his newfound "Busenfreund?" Everything I have just summarized—from meeting the shepherd boy to seeing the papers to receiving the book from the shepherd to deciding to incorporate the essays into his own diary—all of that happens in the course of a single day and is recounted in a single letter. The narrator's language is intense, obsessive and impulsive. He closes the letter by addressing both mountain and newfound spirit guide at once:

> Und du Berg, den ich mit jedem Morgen künftig besteigen werde, sollst der Namesgenosse meine Verklärten sein—Dein Name auf der Karte meiner Wandrungen durch dies Leben sei der *Sonnenberg*! (*W* 1:716).

There is perhaps no better word for the narrator's attitude, here, than "schwärmerisch." Has the narrator found a path to initiation, or has his preoccupation with death taken a turn for the worse, leading him towards an unhealthy obsession with the idea of an afterlife and with the ghost of a shepherd boy's deceased father? Is this the *Sonnenmetaphorik* or the *Abendmetaphorik* at work?

In the next section of the third letter, readers' attention is drawn specifically to the time of its composition—*Abends*; it also shows that the narrator's contemplation has moved into his imagination and away from his sense-perceptions. The letter is dated: "den 27sten Juli. *Abends*" (*W* 1:716, my emphasis). The explicit temporal marker was not included in prior letters, so we must conclude that it has some significance here. It seems that Moritz wants to remind us that while the boy looks for the ghost of his father in the sunrise every morning, our narrator sets

aside time for writing and reflection at the opposite boundary of the day, as daylight turns to darkness and the traditional witching hour of midnight approaches. The July 27th letter is also unusual in that it begins with an address to the unnamed recipient, rather than beginning right away with a description of the day or the surroundings outside. The narrator sits "bei [einer] einsamen Lampe" and pictures the image of a distant room where he imagines his friend might be sitting at that very moment:

> Liegt dein Hund vor deiner Hütte und wacht? Hast du den Riegel inwendig vorgeschoben—pfeift der Wind noch durch die Ritzen deiner Fensterladen—sitzest du fein einsame und sicher bei deiner Lampe mit dem hellen Tocht *wie ich*? (*W* 1:716, my emphasis)

The narrator might be said to engage in a kind of spirit-seeing here, using his imagination to "see" a distant room, inaccessible to his physical senses. The structure of this moment of reflection inverts that of the previous letters—rather than looking out the window, the narrator now ignores the physical sensory perceptions that surround him in favor of an invisible image. Rather than seeing the sun shining into his room ("in mein kleines Fenster," from the first letter), the narrator imaginatively illuminates a distant room. In the process, he also practices a kind of *Verschmelzung*, blending his identity with that of his friend by imagining them sitting in similar circumstances ("sitzest du [...] wie ich"). This commonality is perhaps supposed to represent the fact that both of them, in the narrator's mind, are fundamentally "einsam."

The narrator's connection with Sonnenberg seems to cultivate this turn toward imagination. Just as a séance might call forth the spirit of one long dead, the narrator's imagination seems to specifically resuscitate elements of the past—revitalizing and incorporating them into his experience of the present. This is evidenced by the way he generates the fantasy image of his friend; he cobbles together bits and pieces of memory and assembles them into a whole, which he can then imagine as if he is perceiving it through his senses. It is clear from the

next set of rhetorical questions asked about his friend's current situation that the narrator is relying here on memory:

> Ist das Gewebe der großen Spinne in der Ecke am Fenster *noch immer* nicht zerstört—Hast du dein altes Klavier mit dem geborstnen Resonanzboden wieder gestimmt? und bauest du *noch immer* an deiner Orgel? (*W* 1:716, my emphases)

The recurrence of that phrase "noch immer" and the references to specific images known to both friends indicate that the narrator primarily draws from memories, which he has granted a kind of enduring mental legacy. This image of his friend—sitting by a solitary lamp, like him—is essentially the ghost of a former experience, linked in an enduring way to the attributes of his physical space (the cobweb, the piano, the organ). Within the narrator's imagination, this set of memories can be re-read or remembered, becoming a part of his present narrative. This helps clarify how the narrator takes up Sonnenberg's papers. Whether reading Sonnenberg's words or remembering his friend, the narrator's contemplation of the past allows it to resonate anew within his present.

The narrator draws from Sonnenberg's papers as though from an additional bank of memories. Sonnenberg's writings are more like a loose collection of papers than a proper book;[176] though certain sections are given titles, they are not organized in any sort of order. It is left to the narrator to pull out segments and incorporate them into his letters as he sees fit; these papers become analogous to his own thoughts or memories that he can arrange and rearrange at will. The objects that the narrator selects as he imagines his friend's room have additional significance with regard to the idea of resonance. In building his image, the narrator selects a cobweb, a piano with a broken *Resonanzboden*, and an unfinished organ. Each of these objects is defined by its ability to resonate. A bug lands at one end of a spider's web, and the spider can

[176] The papers "[sind] nach keine Seintenzahl geordnet, sondern [bestehen] aus lauter untereinandergeworfnen Quart- und Oktavblättchen" (*W* 1:724).

feel its presence in the vibration of the fibers. The piano's soundboard resonates to amplify and enhance the sound of the vibrating strings. An organ similarly relies on resonance—one presses the organ's key and at some distance away, a great pipe trembles and creates a booming sound. The resonance of each object augments a smaller impulse or transmits that impulse from one site to another. The narrator, analogously, selects minor details from his memory or from Sonnenberg's papers, allowing the resonance he feels with them to augment the reality and potency of the image he perceives in the present.

As mentioned above, the narrator's excitement at finding his own words echoed in Sonnenberg's indicates a fundamental resonance between them. The narrator builds this resonance when he begins to incorporate Sonnenberg's words into his own. It is significant that the narrator excerpts two short essays from Sonnenberg's writings about the concept of *Zusammenhang*. The themes of unity and duality that figure in these essays effectively describe the relationship between the narrator and Sonnenberg, but also demonstrate the further *Verschmelzung* of their voices. The essays present opposing viewpoints about the nature of *Zusammenhang*. On the one hand,

> es ist nur Zwang, der die Teile der Körper zusammenhält; ihre eigentliche immerwährende Natur ist, aufgelöst, außereinander, nicht mehr zu einem Ganzen untergeordnet, sondern sich gleich zu sein, wie die Teile des Staubes sich einander gleich sind, (*W* 1:720)

but on the other hand, "Das voneinander abgesonderte hat einen Hang, eine Tendenz, ein Streben, *zusammen zu sein*" (*W* 1:723). These two ideas—that *Zusammenhang* is something imposed on parts that have a naturally tendency to separate and that *Zusammenhang* is something towards which disparate things trend—simultaneously contradict and complement each other. The oscillation between them reads as an echo of the narrator's musings about the transition from life to death in his earlier letters. The narrator posits the inner desire of souls to mingle with

one another, to dissolve the particularity of their individual identities (see *W* 1:704); this is echoed in Sonnenberg's assertion that "Loslassen [ist] mit *Erleichterung* verbunden" (*W* 1:722). The narrator's dread of dying, however, could also be attributed to the "Zwang" to cling to the "Teile der Körper" and hold them together. Though the dissolution of death may be a relief, there is a contradictory need to retain differentiated individuality, maintained by the *Zusammenhang* of the individual body. This unification of parts into a cohesive whole makes life bearable. "Soll das Leben erträglich werden," writes Sonnenberg, "so muß erst Interesse hineinkommen [...] Interesse erhält es aber allein dadurch, wenn alles darin zu einem Ganzen übereinstimmt" (*W* 1:725). The need for *Zusammenhang*, the need to gather things into a unified whole, invests life with meaning. Sonnenberg and the narrator do not just think alike—they also employ the same metaphorical strategies in their discourse. The relationship between life and that investment of meaning is "eben so wie in ein Schauspiel" (*W* 1:725) according to Sonnenberg, and the narrator similarly views the world around him as though watching a play; on June 1st, he writes: "die Natur hat wiederum einen großen Akt vollendet, und läßt nun den Vorhang fallen" (*W* 1:705).

The intensification of this "Verschmelzung" between Sonnenberg and the narrator, which now affects the narrator's perceptions, has still not been marked as decidedly positive or negative, as grounded or ungrounded *Phantasie*. It is not clear whether Sonnenberg's texts are leading the narrator down a path that is fundamentally *pro*gressive, *re*gressive, or even *trans*gressive. His behavior towards the shepherd boy has been questionable at best. On July 27th, he reports hiding in a bush to watch the boy during his morning prayers, stealing an opportunity to spy on a private ritual of reflection and remembrance. His descriptions of what he witnesses are structured as rhetorical questions that imply a hidden layer of guilt, as though he knows that he should not have been there, but could not help himself: "[...] und ich hätte dieser lebendigen

Fülle nicht auch genießen, ich hätte diese herrlichen Augenblicke nicht für *Lebenszweck* halten sollen?" (*W* 1:717). The overwhelming profundity of what he sees—in the landscape around him, in the morning light, and also in the boy's face and expression—is supposed to justify the fact that he is basically stalking a young boy that he barely knows.

Perhaps even worse is the fact that he cannot quite decide whether the boy is real or not. Once he steps out of the bushes and talks with the boy that morning, they talk for over an hour. At the end of the conversation, the narrator claims:

> [ich] wußte am Ende [des Gesprächs] nicht mehr, ob ich träumte, oder wachte—mir wandelten plötzlich alle meine ehemalign egoistischen Zweifel an, und ich fing im Ernst an zu fürchten, daß dieser Hirtenknabe kein wirklicher Hirtenknabe, sondern ein bloßes Geschöpf meiner Einbildungskraft, und seine Reden vielleicht das bloß Echo meiner eigenen Gedanken sein möchten."(*W* 1:717-718)

This radical suggestion opens an entirely different set of interpretative possibilities; if the boy is not real, the narrator's *Geistersehen* might actually be a form of madness in which he encounters apparitional figures, conjured by his own psyche; he does, in fact, refer to the boy several times as an "Erscheinung." In this radical reading, the similarities between Sonnenberg's writings and the narrator's could be explained as follows: the narrator is the only authorial voice, and Sonnenberg is the externalization of an idea that the narrator is exploring.

Interpreting the shepherd boy as a projection of the narrator's psyche would explain the idealized portrait that we receive of the boy, who seems to exist in a pre-Lapsarian state. When the narrator asks him, for example, whether he has ever read the Bible, the boy answers "Ja—Die Schöpfungsgeschichte," as though implying that his exposure to the Bible never went as far as the fateful moment when Adam and Eve eat from the Tree of Life. If the boy is indeed a figment of the narrator's imagination, he might exist as an idealized version of innocence that the narrator has lost. The narrator's anguish at the tortured state of his mind is framed in terms of the Fall:

> Vorher fand keine Wahl statt; jetzt mußte der Mensch zwischen dem Guten und Bösen, zwischen dem rechten und unrechten Gebrauch des einmal erfundnen wählen (*W* 1:731).

During a late night writing session, as he contemplates his fallen state, the narrator interpolates a passage from a prose translation of Milton's *Paradise Lost* into his letter—a passage in which Eve gives Adam the fruit from the Tree of Life.

Even if this radical reading of the text is merely a far-fetched possibility, there is a potentially transgressive quality to the narrator's quest to meld his spirit with Sonnenberg's. His inability to distinguish dream from reality suggests an ungrounded *Phantasie* that seems only to grow under Sonnenberg's influence. Whatever else might be true of the third set of letters, they have been written during the "Abend," under the sign of the text's negatively charged *Abendmetaphorik*. In the next epistolary installment, the *Fragmente* races into nighttime, in which the dissolution of boundaries results in an overwhelming confrontation with the frightening expanse.

Night Terrors and the Frightening Expanse

Even in name, Sonnenberg possesses a direct, unmediated connection to the text's *Sonnenmetaphorik* and its associated aspects of esoteric wisdom and expansive vision. Whether the narrator's *Verschmelzung* with Sonnenberg brings him closer to wisdom or not, it does demonstrate how he uses Sonnenberg's papers to mediate his thinking. The narrator's association with the *Abendmetaphorik* informs our understanding of the tension he experiences in attempting to connect with the wisdom of the *Sonnenmetaphorik*. While Sonnenberg's connection to wisdom may seem direct and harmonious, the narrator experiences conflict in his thinking and in his efforts to cultivate a connection to the *Geisterwelt.* His contemplation of the limitless heavens

evokes more fear than awe, and this letter of the *Fragmente* leaves him lost in a labyrinth of dark thoughts and ungrounded *Phantasie*, unable to yet transcend the *Abendmetaphorik*.

The beginning of the next, undated letter (following the July 27th letter), contrasts the text's *Sonnen-* and *Abendmetaphoriks* as represented in the shepherd boy and the narrator, respectively. In it, the narrator reports walking through the "Dämmerung" with the boy and arriving at Sonnenberg's grave (see *W* 1:728). Standing by this physical sign commemorating the death of the earthly form, the narrator and the shepherd boy differentiate themselves from one another quite clearly. The narrator directs his "Blicke auf den Boden" and tears come to his eyes (*W* 1:728); but the shepherd boy directs his gaze towards the last light of the setting sun, "und eine himmlische Heiterkeit strahlte aus seinem Gesichte" (*W* 1:728). Even in the gloaming, the boy retains his connection with the sun and acts as his own source of divine illumination, while the narrator sinks into mournfulness and the preoccupation with earthly death. This depiction of their contrasting responses juxtaposes the qualities of the *Sonnenmetaphorik* with the *Abendmetaphorik.*

The next section of the letter presents a dichotomy that typifies the tension of the narrator's thinking—a simultaneous longing for limitation and expansion. Though Sonnenberg is not as associated with inner tension, his papers reflect a shared understanding of these conflicting impulses. After his walk with the boy, the narrator returns home and stands at his window, looking out at the gathering dusk. In a lengthy sentence that is somewhat uncharacteristic of the *Fragmente* he meditates on the houses he sees and the people living inside:

> Hier stand ich noch eine Weile am Fenster, und sahe die Reihe von Hütten an, die hier nebeneinander stehen, mit den Torwegen vor den einzelnen Bauerhöfen, und dann die kleinen niedrigen Fenster in den Leimwänden [...] (*W* 1:728)

He thinks also about the "Menschen, die da wohnten, etwa noch um den Tisch sitzend, und redend von den Geschäften des Tages" (*W* 1:728). This contemplation of the "Hütten" and their residents recalls the start of Sonnenberg's essay on *Zusammenhang*, in which he locates himself both within his body and within his hut:

> Eine Hütte wohnet in der andern; beide werden in Staub zerfallen. Mein Leib noch früher, als du von Leimen zusammengesetztes Haus (*W* 1:720).

This matroshka-like nesting of enclosures represents, for both Sonnenberg and the narrator, the kind of limitation that prevents dissolution into a morass of undifferentiated dust. As the narrator contemplates the isolated, segregated lives of these huts within huts, he seems to envy them their limitations—"O die Einschränkung des Denkens ist so süß" (*W* 1:729). On the other hand, he also seems to recognize that the comfort of limitation can be debilitating to those seeking truth. The narrator acknowledges his own compulsion to reach beyond it, using the metaphor of sea exploration to describe the journey into that terrifying beyond: he has thoughts that

> [entreißen sich] jener seligen Einschränkung, jenem glücklichen, rund umher mit Bergen umgebendenen Eilande, und [führen sich] immer wieder auf das weite ungestüme Meer, wo [er] ohne Steuer und Kompaß auf einem leichten Brette umhertreibt (*W* 1:729).

The narrator vacillates between longings for limitation and expansion because he experiences conflicted attitudes toward both conditions; he finds limitation comforting but debilitating, expansion desirable but frightening.

Both the narrator and Sonnenberg identify the possibility of finding the *Geisterwelt* between heaven and earth, between observation of the specific (or limited) and contemplation of the expansive. While the narrator observes the specific with admiration, he contemplates the expansive with a *Verschmelzung* of awe and fear. To cultivate a connection with the *Geisterwelt*, both the narrator and Sonnenberg suggest the following practice: look towards the heavens, turn your eye down and consider the blade of grass, then look back towards the heavens again. The

practice they outline oscillates from expanse to limitation to expanse. Like a pendulum, the narrator swings between observation and contemplation; he goes from admiring the tidy array of nested enclosures to contemplating, with tremendous fear, the boundless expanse of the heavens: "*Weite*, die man nicht ausfüllen kann, erweckt Furcht und Grausen." We know from the terms established thus far that this expanse refers to more than sky. Though his sense of awe arises from contemplation of the physical expanse, the narrator's prior meditations on life after death allow us to understand the concept of *Weite* as having a supernatural connotation; as the soul separates from the delimited boundaries of the body, it too confronts a limitless expanse. In this sense, the narrator's experience of fear may be greater and darker in anticipation/dread of his own death—his spirit's confrontation with a dissolute expanse.

Though Sonnenberg and the narrator both advocate contemplation of a boundless expanse in cultivating a connection to the *Geisterwelt*, this does not immediately yield esoteric wisdom for the narrator. On the contrary, it inspires an intense fear that evidently keeps him up all night, for a long subsection of this letter is written under the title "Nachts um ein Uhr." In this nighttime section, his thoughts are intentionally difficult to follow. The opposition of the narrator and the shepherd boy is highlighted by the opening lines of the "Nachts" section, in which the narrator imagines the boy asleep while he sits up alone: "Schlummer sanft, guter Knabe" (*W* 1:731). In the ensuing reflections, which are written like a stream-of-consciousness, the narrator muses in Rousseau-ian fashion, on the nature of true happiness, wondering if it lies in some pre-cognitive and pre-cultural state. Reconsidering, he then decides that human institutions may not be bad, primarily because he cannot discern the tipping point between good institutions and bad ones. Eventually, to explain the otherwise inexplicable presence of evil in basically neutral institutions, he supposes that perhaps "die Freiheit der endlichen Wesen [Mann] ist nur

anscheinend" (*W* 1:735). Perhaps the turn towards evil is fated, determined long before the moment of birth. He then challenges his own supposition, reasoning that if it were true, then the Creator would have produced all of the evil in the world and looked upon it all as nothing more than "ein *wohlgefälliges Spiel*" (*W* 1:735). Horrified, dejected and confused, the narrator ends his nighttime rant in nihilistic despair: "Und was wäre das für ein Schöpfer? Wer bebt nicht mit Schaudern vor diesem Abgrunde zurück!" (*W* 1:735).

This nighttime section recalls, if not explicitly, the dreaded mental labyrinth of ungrounded *Phantasie*. The formal experimentation intensifies with interpolated poems and sections from other texts (*Paradise Lost*), and the course of the narrator's thinking proceeds in an unfocused fashion, frequently taking unexpected turns. In the earlier section of that same letter (written during the evening, rather than at night), the narrator poses one of the central questions for the *Fragmente*: "*Bin ich den aus einem natürlichen zu einem unnatürlichen Zustande übergegangen*?" (*W* 1:729). In connecting so deeply and so quickly with Sonnenberg's spirit, embodied in the writings he left behind, has the narrator undergone a kind of *Verschmelzung* that is, in fact, altogether unhealthy? Clearly, the melancholy and despair of his *Abendmetaphorik* has intensified, becoming now a *Nachtmetaphorik*. But as the text moves towards its conclusion (such as it is), is there yet hope for resolution?

"Unnatürlich" or "Übernatürlich"?

The comparative ease and directness of Sonnenberg's connection to the *Geisterwelt* may not be possible for the narrator, but the final letter of the *Fragmente* suggests an alternate way of approaching an *Überblick* and *Übernaturlich* vision—a way that passes through fear and conflict before transcending them. "O Nacht, was brütest du für Gedanken aus!" the narrator writes at the

start of this letter (presumably written the next day, though it is also undated). The plot offers an emblematic illustration of the narrator's failure to gain wisdom purely through the *Sonnenmetaphorik*; he has slept through the sunrise, thereby missing the opportunity of seeing Sonnenberg's spirit on the hillside. Nevertheless, he attempts to recalibrate his thoughts with the natural world and reground his *Phantasie* once again: "*Mein Denken soll mit der Natur harmonisch sein, wie mein ganzes Leben*" (*W* 1:736). This return to the daylight and to a relative sense of peace initiates the final, lengthy letter in the *Fragmente*. Excerpts from Sonnenberg's writings are again included—in this case, a lengthy piece on Freemasonry and a Freemason song, for it is revealed that Sonnenberg was in fact a Freemason. These pieces of Freemasonry help us clarify key differences between Sonnenberg's and the narrator's philosophies. The unanswered question posed in the nighttime letter—"*Bin ich den aus einem natürlichen zu einem unnatürlichen Zustande übergegangen*?"—is not referenced again, nor is it explicitly answered. But a careful reading of this letter will show that the text does, in a way, answer it by elaborating the possibility of an *übernatürlichen Zustand* (as opposed to an *unnatürlichen Zustand*), a concept which I will refer to as the text's "supernatural aesthetics."

Though the narrator may return to some state of calm once he is again surrounded by the daylight and the natural world, aspects of his *Abendmetaphorik* remain and continue to distinguish him from Sonnenberg. Re-grounding his *Phantasie* seems to elevate the memory of his fear into a sense of awe; he has retained interest in the concept of expansiveness, though no longer seems to fear it during the daytime. "Das *Große* wollen wir ja," he asserts, replacing the concept of *expanse* (*Weite*) with that of *greatness* (*Große*) (*W* 1:737). For the narrator, the distinction between the two terms seems to be rooted in the fact that "greatness" is manmade, whereas "expanse" is simply a condition of existence: "Wenn Tausende an einem Tage vor dem

Schwertstreich fallen, das ist doch etwas *Großes,*" he explains (*W* 1:737). This conception of greatness may be explained by analogy to his imaginative processes. The narrator's imaginative visions are also *made*; they re-make memories—imaginatively re-form and elevate moments that would otherwise be annihilated by time. The narrator's conception of greatness is similarly born of destruction. He claims that human activity, even or perhaps especially when it is directed towards an act of destruction, establishes the conditions whereby the capacities of the human imagination are expanded. This imaginative expansion is facilitated by texts that capture such destructive acts—histories and works of literature, such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The narrator additionally suggests that the need to experience greatness is rooted in the desire to expand human capacities: "unsre Seele will ja erweitert sein, unsre Einbildungskraft will *viel* umspannen" (*W* 1:737)." This expansion of human capacities seems to strengthen connection to the *Geisterwelt* in many senses—it supports the life of the mind and may even develop into a sense of "Übernaturlich" greatness.

The narrator's emphasis on destruction as a prerequisite for the expansion of mind places him in direct opposition to Sonnenberg, the Freemason; for Sonnenberg and others of his society, "building" is of superior importance: "Was heißt ein Freimaurer überhaupt? […] es bedeutet einen tätigen unternehmenden Menschen, der etwas bauet" (*W* 1:746). The narrator, by contrast, has fully embraced the significance that destruction holds for humankind: "unsre neuen Ideen haben wir uns nicht sowohl durch *Bauen*, als durch Zerstören geschaffen" (*W* 1:738). Despite their fundamental differences, the builder and the destroyer both require the attribute of courage [*Mut*]. The destroyer must have the courage to look upon obliteration as though "ein *Schauspiel* [sich] vor unsern Blicken darstellte" (*W* 1:738). The narrator also declares that nothing can be more limiting to the efforts of the Freemason than "Furcht" (*W* 1:748). Sonnenberg and the

narrator imagine humankind progressing by contradictory means, though both characters advocate the primacy of liberation from fear.

Sonnenberg's and the narrator's contrasting beliefs—in building and in destruction—are evident in two images of flowers, which additionally re-inscribe the characters' connections to the *Sonnen-* and *Abendmetaphoriks*. Having cited destruction as the primary model of human progress, the narrator asks what follows; what image can represent the growth and development facilitated by obliteration? The image he finds is a flower: "Wo duftet denn nun die Blume, die aus diesem unreinen Schutt emporsprießt?" At the end of this great work of destruction, he imagines a single flower rising from the rubble. In a further *Verschmelzung* of his and Sonnenberg's voices, the narrator then interpolates one of Sonnenberg's poems, which speaks of "die geliebte *Rose*": "In den Purpurstreifen, / Die den Osten färben / Scheint sie noch zu schweben" (*W* 1:740). The *Phantasie* of both men centers around a flower; for the narrator, that flower grows at the end of things, in the metaphorical twilight following destruction, while for Sonnenberg, that flower grows in the east, under the light of the rising sun—potentially preceding a day of work or building. In each image, that flower remains imperfect. For the narrator, the thought that the flower represents is incomplete and seems doomed to remain so when the narrator's death arrives. For Sonnenberg, the "geliebte Rose" may still sway in the light of the rising sun, but that flower is also lost, distant and unattainable. Though expanded human capacities may be cultivated, neither image conveys a total comprehension or complete unification with the emergent knowledge.

The *Fragmente* itself can only approach that elusive flower; as its title suggests, this text falls short of totality and completion, thereby embodying a particular aesthetic problematic—simultaneously demanding integration within its readers' minds and highlighting its own

fragmented nature. One of the text's most famous passages contributes to that aesthetic discourse; in one section of the essay entitled "Gegenwart und Vergangenheit," Sonnenberg describes the possibility of synthetic *Überblick* perception, contrasting it with a sequential amalgamation of component parts. Sonnenberg begins the essay by describing an experience of space: "Wenn ich eine Stadt besehen will, und befinde mich unten an der Erde, so muß ich eine Straße nach der andern durchgehen, und es abwarten, bis sich mir nach und nach, durch Hülfe meins Gedächtnisses, die Vorstellung von der ganzen Stadt darbietet" (*W* 1:741). This outlines the process of constructing a mental image of a physical place—by moving through the space and experiencing the pieces of it in sequence, we eventually become capable of visualizing the whole ["die Vorstellung von der ganzen Stadt"] by recollecting the accumulated images of our memory. There is, however, another way to see the whole city: "Stehe ich aber auf einem Turme, von dem ich die *Übersicht* der ganzen Stadt habe, so sehe ich nun dasjenige auf einmal und neben einander, was ich vorher nach einander sehen mußte" (*W* 1:741, my emphasis). Here, rather than constructing an image of the whole through the gradual amassing of images in a sequence, we are afforded the opportunity of seeing the city all at once, of experiencing the whole in a single moment. Transposing this spatial image onto an aesthetics of reading, it might be said that the *Fragmente* encourages us to move towards an *Überblick* perspective rather than trapping us in the sequential events of an unfolding plot. Its experimental form creates an unusual reading experience; the *Verschmelzung* of the narrator and Sonnenberg allows us to perceive a diad as a unity, reading two voices at the same time. As images and patterns recur, our memories lift us from the immersive norm of linear narrative—earlier iterations of motif return to us like ghosts and we perceive the set of images at once, each alongside all the others.

But how do you ascend that tower and achieve that kind of *Überblick*—through building or through destruction? The architectural nature of the metaphor suggests the former; the tower (and subsequent perspective it enables) is built through a constructive and disciplined process. But constructing the tower is not the same as viewing the city from its top; if you only focus on the process of building, you cannot step back enough to take in the view. Above all of the individuated buildings and streets, that tower offers a Godlike perspective that somewhat resembles the melded, undifferentiated expanse the narrator associates with death. Atop the tower, one is lifted from the obstructed view below—the conditions of (literal) groundedness are suspended, almost as though the viewer were disembodied. But if the individual consciousness is extinguished in the destruction of death, then there is no organizing self who can perceive the phenomena. As the tower is located between earth and heaven, the *Überblick* perspective represents a middle path between building and destruction, limitation and expansion. Sonnenberg writes a little allegory that neatly illustrates the merits of navigating between extremes—a foolhardy, a coward, and a circumspect man are walking through the woods. Around midday, they arrive at a river, and the foolhardy man and the coward start to argue about the best way across. Meanwhile, the circumspect man—the one who is neither foolishly brave nor cowardly—finds a way across and then comes back with a tree limb for the others to hold onto, helping them across.

Ascending the tower requires this sort of middle path, this *Verschmelzung* of approaches that is neither one extreme nor the other; though the tower offers an elevated perspective, its base rests on the land. The narrator approaches the *Überblick* perspective by navigating a middle path between the unnatural fear of his nighttime *Phantasie* and the calming specificity of his daytime observations of nature. Neither "natural" nor "unnatural," this *Überblick* perspective might be

aptly described as *übernatürlich* or *super*natural. Understood in these terms, *Geistersehen*—a form of *super*natural perception—becomes an expression of the *Überblick* perspective. It constitutes a form of *übernatürlich* vision insofar as it ascends above the limitations of the natural. The narrator's night terrors demonstrate a potential danger of distancing oneself from the grounding influence of nature; his uncertainty regarding the shepherd boy's existence also presents the possibility of perceiving false ghosts—externalizations of one's hidden desires—rather than true ones. But learning to have courage in the face of the undifferentiated expanse theoretically grounds one's *Phantasie* and allows for *übernaturlich* perception or true spirit-seeing.

The closing passages of the *Fragmente* offer us several images that further develop the connection between *Geistersehen* and the *Überblick* perspective—though it is worth mentioning that these images feature a *Geist* seeing its body, not a body perceiving a *Geist*. As Sonnenberg approaches his death, he attains an *Überblick* perspective on himself—his experience is *übernaturlich* and, disembodied, he reports seeing himself as though from a distance. As the narrator approaches the end of his letter, he too acquires an *Überblick* perspective on himself; by excerpting an allegory from Sonnenberg's writings that presents a figure nearly identical to himself, the narrator is able to transcend the limits of his interiority and view himself as though from an omniscient or *übernaturlich* point of view. The narrator introduces these final passages with a carefully worded sentence: "Die nun folgenden Aufsätze scheinen nicht lange vor seinem Tode niedergeschrieben zu sein" (*W* 1:762). He is referring to Sonnenberg, who evidently approaches the twilight of his life. He then transitions into a short allegory that depicts a man who spends the day sitting by the bank of a river, watching the stream of water pass. This "einsamtrauernde" man does nothing but gaze into this river, until evening approaches: "Da hob

er sein Klagelied an, und sprach: 'Ich weinte, da meine Mutter mich mit Schmerzen gebar.'" (*W* 1:762). This character resembles the narrator in obvious ways; isolated and alone, he sits by the window of his apartment, gazing out at the events of the world passing him by, as though they were the water streaming along a river. As night approaches, his mind turns to thoughts of the Fall of man and he envies the innocence of the shepherd boy, who still seems to live in a pre-Lapsarian state. Sonnenberg's reference to birthing pains is also a reference to the Fall—as Eve's punishment for eating of the Tree of Life was that she would suffer pain when birthing. In essence, the man sitting by the bank of the river is crying out, "I cry because humankind is fallen."

The final passage contains the detailed description of Sonnenberg's *übernaturlich* experience. "Zum erstenmale habe ich heute die unaussprechliche Seligkeit empfunden, mich außer mir selbst zu sehen" (*W* 1:762) it reads, going on to describe what it was like to look at himself while standing outside himself. This passage reports what Sonnenberg wrote before his death, but it also invites comparison to the prior passage—both observe a male figure from an external perspective. This comparison suggests a way of interpreting the allegory. If it is essentially a description of the narrator, and the narrator has just read that passage while incorporating it into his own textual corpus, then the narrator has just experienced (perhaps for the first time) what it is like to look at himself from outside. He has seen himself within the body of the text, just as Sonnenberg regards his body while standing outside of it. "Ich war ein Gott in dem Augenblick," he writes (*W* 1:762). In each of these moments, Sonnenberg and the narrator experience an *übernatürlichen Überblick* of themselves.

Conclusion

"Der Buchstab tötet, aber der Geist macht lebendig"—this is the epigraph for *Andreas Hartknopf, eine Allegorie*, but it is entirely fitting for the *Fragmente* as well. As Elliott Schreiber has astutely observed, Moritz ultimately finds the work of art incommensurate with the great totality it represents. The elevated moment it attempts to capture exists as a whole immediately prior to its translation into an art form. If that form is a text, this is particularly pronounced, as a text can never truly escape the prison of sequential unfolding. The lines we scan from left to right are the streets of a city whose topography we gradually come to know through the sequential process of reading. Recurrent patterns and motifs can help to lift us out of this sequence. Yet the *Fragmente*'s "supernatural aesthetics"—its cultivation of the reader's *Überblick* perspective—ultimately pertains to art reception, rather than artistic creation. When the narrator has the chance to perceive himself in Sonnenberg's allegory, the crucial act of *Geistersehen* happens for him as a *reader* of Sonnenberg's papers. The text itself is not complete; it does not offer up the totality of an elevated moment. That experience can only occur outside of the text in the caesura between the first passage and the second, when the narrator recognizes himself. That moment, in turn, is set down only after the fact, influencing the form of the second passage. It will take another act of reading—another act of "spirit-seeing"—to re-enliven it.

Moritz's entry in the *Geisterseherroman* tradition is unique for many reasons, though none more curious than this analogy between *Geistersehen* and reading and the subsequent implication that the reader and not of the creator of the artwork may achieve an *Überblick* or *übernaturlich* perspective. It is not a plot-driven story about deception and conspiracy, nor does it set down anything that closely resembles any sort of traditional ghost-story. It is entirely understandable that it has been largely read as a loose jumble of ideas without a plot. But the

central tension between the narrator's *Abendemetaphorik* and Sonnenberg's *Sonnenmetaphorik* drives the text towards the articulation and modeling of a supernatural aesthetics that places the metaphorical act of "ghost-seeing" at the center of artistic reception. Because the work of art is always incommensurate with the grand totality it attempts to capture, the dead textual body requires an audience who can, in the act of reading, perceive the ghost of what it once was: an elevated vision immediately preceding the text's creation.

CHAPTER FOUR:
THE PERILS OF SUSPENSE:
FRIEDRICH SCHILLER'S *DER GEISTERSEHER*

In 1785, a year before Karl Philipp Moritz worked on the *Fragmente aus dem Tagebuch eines Geistersehers*, an infamous ghost-seer named Cagliostro (Giuseppe Balsamo, 1743-1795) stood trial in Paris for his alleged involvement in the Diamond Necklace Affair. Though Cagliostro played only a minor role in that particular controversy, the trial prompted an investigation that set off a chain of events resulting in his arrest, late in 1789, in Rome. This momentous trial and the subsequent downfall of Cagliostro shook the public's faith in reason as an impenetrable safeguard against deception. The attention directed towards Cagliostro's widespread and largely successful deceits suggested something deeply disturbing about suspense and the limits of reason. As discussed in the chapters on Kant and Eberhard, a certain pattern of thinking in the late eighteenth century can be linked to the mechanism of a magic lantern and its projections:[177] the author presents an inexplicable, ostensibly supernatural phenomenon for consideration, then reveals the underlying mechanism that produced the appearance of something inexplicable. This reasoning process could result in the expansion or refinement of knowledge; it required the temporary suspension of normal assumptions in order to create space for this

[177] This reading is indebted to Stefan Andriopoulos's study on the place of the magic lantern as a cognitive figure within the intellectual history of German Idealism. In particular, Andriopoulos finds instances in both Kant and Hegel in which analogies of magic lantern projection are used as a means of conceiving of human perception and its translation into thought. Building on Andriopoulos's work, I understand magic lantern projection as a cognitive figure depicting the process of reasoning in general (see also note 2). Stefan Andriopoulos, *Ghostly Apparitions: German Idealism, the Gothic Novel, and Optical Media* (New York: Zone Books, 2013).

expansion, but it was ultimately productive, edifying and improving. More importantly, it seemed trustworthy, safe and reliable. The exposing of Cagliostro's frauds made clear an uncomfortable fact: though a tool like a magic lantern can be instrumental in the production of knowledge, it can also be instrumental in the processes of deceit, fraud, and deception.

The revelation that Cagliostro had fooled so many people gave rise to two conflicting interpretations; were people fooled because they had not learned to embrace reason fully enough, or was reason inadequate to guarantee protection against deception? Had the deceiver learned to predict and anticipate his audience's response effectively enough that reason could actually be used as a tool of deception? Evidently, some felt it proved that the public still needed a rigorous education in the falsehood of all things supernatural. Friedrich Nicolai continued debunking supernatural occurrences in the tradition of Eberhard, Hennings and others—the famous incident of the *Spuk in Tegel*, for instance, took place in the 1790's. Samuel Christoph Wagener's wildly popular "ghost story" collection,[178] which for educational purposes presented seemingly supernatural events and then consistently debunked them, also was not published until 1799. Their approach to the supernatural seems to advocate the value of exposing oneself to seemingly inexplicable occurrences: by continuing to confront the supernatural and recognize its falseness, an audience can learn to see through those who might use it for the purposes of deception. Ghost stories like these allow one to practice the application of healthy reason.[179] Alternatively, the fact

[178] Samuel Christoph Wagener, *Die Gespenster: Kurze Erzählung aus dem Reiche der Wahrheit*, (Berlin: Friedrich Maurer, 1798); and also Wagener, *Neue Gespenster: Kurze Erzählungen aus dem Reicher der Wahrheit* (Berlin: Friedrich Maurer, 1801-1802).

[179] "Healthy reason" is a term that the Prince uses in *Der Geisterseher,* and its usage in that context will be discussed later. By the application or exercise of reason, in the Enlightenment sense, I am following more or less the framework laid out by Ernst Cassirer in his *Philosophie der Aufklärung*, which articulates a twofold structure to the process of reasoning in the 18th

that Cagliostro had so effectively fooled so many perhaps exposed a weakness in the assumption that the exercise of reason leads to autonomy and freedom. Once one recognizes the structural similarities between reasoning and deception, one must contend with the frightening idea that the healthy exercise of reason can never fully preclude the possibility of being deceived. If thinking always proceeds according to a certain system—if it becomes a mechanism not unlike a magic lantern—what can stop someone like Cagliostro from seizing that mechanism and utilizing it for his own purposes?

In his unfinished novel *Der Geisterseher*[180] from 1787-1789, Friedrich Schiller explores this problematic of manipulation in a kind of fictional case study,[181] tracking the downward trajectory of a prince deceived by the pseudo-supernatural machinations of a mysterious figure known as the Armenian. This text differs from those discussed in the previous chapters for two reasons. Firstly, it has become enough a part of the German canon that it has already received considerable scholarly attention, which has pulled interpretations in numerous directions. In part because Schiller wrote *Der Geisterseher* at a transitional moment in his career, between the end

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century: (1) the phenomenon is systematically deconstructed to it constitutive elements; (2) the phenomenon is then reconstructed, and in the process of this reconstruction, understood.

[180] All references to *Der Geisterseher* in this chapter refer to the Deutscher Klassiker Verlag edition and will be henceforth cited in parentheses according to the following format (*FA* [page #]): Friedrich Schiller, *Werke und Briefe*, Vol. 7, (Frankfurt am Main, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2002).

[181] The relationships of case studies to early experiments in fiction in the late eighteenth century is more often discussed in relationship to Karl Philipp Moritz and his writings from the 1780's. But insofar as the Graf introduces his narrative about the prince as a "Beitrag zur Geschichte des Betrugs und der Verirrungen des menschilichen Geistes" (*FA* 7, 1000), one might think of it in similar terms.

of a period of literary output and a ten-year period of Kant study and philosophical writings,[182] much of the scholarship that takes the novel seriously explores its philosophical investments.[183] Secondly, though it has a philosophical agenda, *Der Geisterseher* is also clearly a work of entertainment, and was a wildly successful work among the reading public. As Schiller left the novel unfinished, despite tremendous public interest in the conclusion, it inspired at least two authors to publish their own endings (one in the 1790's,[184] one in the 1920's[185]); in addition, it inspired countless imitators in the 1790's[186]—some would say that it inadvertently invented a

[182] Schiller began work on *Der Geisterseher* in Dresden in the summer of 1786, when he was also working intensively on finishing *Don Carlos*. Apart from *Der Geisterseher*, which he wrote only begrudgingly and for which he stopped writing new material by late 1789 at latest, Schiller did not work on any new fictional material until 1795-1796, when he began work on *Wallenstein*. During that roughly ten year period (1786-1796), however, he produced a number of philosophical works, including both *Ueber naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* and *Uber die aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen*.

[183] In the third book edition, Schiller removed a significant portion of the Baron's fourth letter in Book Two, and this extended section of text came to be known as the *philosophische Gespraech* and has been seen as an anticipation of Schiller's later philosophical works, particularly the letters on aesthetic education. See, most recently, Andres Quero Sanchez, "Der Einfluß der Kantischen Philosophie auf Schiller und der fragmentarische Zustand des *Geistersehers* und der *Philosophischen Briefe*", in: *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch im Auftrage der Görres-Gesellschaft* (45:2004): 71-98; and also Hans Heinrich Borcherdt's introduction in the *Nationalausgabe* (*NA* XVI:394); Emil Staiger, *Friedrich Schiller* (Zurich: Atlantic, 1967), 62-65. Lilianne Weissberg's study also reads *Der Geisterseher* as a work that begins as a fictional narrative and moves ever more in the direction of philosophy as it progresses.

[184] Emanuel Friedrich Wilhelm Ernst Follenius, *Der Geisterseher: Aus den Memoiren des Grafen von O: Zweyter und dritter Theil von X. Y. Z.* (Leipzig: Barth, 1796-1797).

[185] Hanns Heinz Ewers, *Der Geisterseher: Aus den Papieren des Grafen von O...* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1922).

[186] For example: Cajetan Tschink, *Geschichte eines Geistersehers. Aus den Papieren des Mannes mit der eisernen Larve*, (Vienna, 1790-1793); Carl Grosse, *Der Genius: Aus den Papieren des Marquis C* von G*** (Halle: J. C. Hendels Verlag, 1791-1794); Karl F. Kahlert, *Der Geisterbanner. Eine Wundergeschichte aus mundlichen und schriftlichen Traditionen gesammelt von Lorenz Flammenberg*, (Vienna: Wallishausser, 1792). These imitators will be discussed again briefly in the conclusion to this chapter.

genre and/or introduced the Gothic to German literature,[187] even though others find it offensive to consider any of Schiller's works as connected with the sub-literary designations of *Trivialliteratur*.[188]

These three aspects of *Der Geisterseher* and its reception—its status as entertainment, its philosophical agenda, and its origins in the revelation of Cagliostro's deceptions[189]—all

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[187] Patrick Bridgwater's study *The German Gothic Novel in Anglo-German Perspective*, in which Schiller's *Geisterseher* figures prominently, is at this point more up-to-date than Michael Hadley's pathfinding study *The Undiscovered Genre*. When Hadley was writing in 1977, information and critical consideration of the German Gothic novel was still "the subject of considerable speculation," (9) and he was not even aware of an extant copy of the German original of Lorenz Flammenberg's *Der Geisterbanner*. Hadley sets out to investigate two texts from the 19th century that he feels have shaped the perception of German horror literature: Carlyle's 1827 essay "State of German Literature," which helped establish the notion in English scholarship that the German Gothic (exemplified by Monk Lewis) is dark and horrifying whereas the English Gothic (exemplified by Radcliffe) is delicate and refined; and J. W. Appell's 1859 book *Die Ritter-, Räuber- und Schauerromantik*, which established terminology for the "undiscovered" genre designations that Hadley is investigating. Bridgwater augments Hadley's study by convincingly demonstrating the perhaps surprising originality of *Der Geisterseher*; based on the timing of various translations of English texts, it would seem that Schiller actually developed his work of the "explained supernatural" (an idea independently developed by Radcliffe in England) without taking direct or overt inspiration from any English sources. Thus, in Bridgwater's view, *Der Geisterseher* figures as part of a rich landscape of "Gothic" German texts that developed in parallel to, but also independently of, English Gothic literature. Both Hadley and Bridgwater are working in a scholarly tradition that also includes the following earlier studies: Marianne Thalmann, *Der Trivialroman des 18. Jahrhunderts und der romantische Roman: Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Geheimbundmystik* (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1934); Walter Bussman, "Schiller's *Geisterseher* und seine Fortsetzer: Ein Beitrag zur Struktur des Geheimbundromans." Diss. Göttigen, 1961; Marion Beaujean, *Der Trivialroman in der zweiten Haelfte des 18, Jahrhunderts: die Ursprung des modernen Unterhaltungsroman* (Bonn: H. Bouvier, 1964); Rosemarie Haas, *Die Turmgesellschaft in* Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre: *Zur Geschichte des Geheimbundromans und der Romantheorie im 18, Jahrhundert* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1975).

[188] Most notably, Benno von Wiese, in his 1959 biography *Friedrich Schiller*, argues that *Der Geisterseher* really does not have much of a relationship to the popular literature that followed in the 1790's. Rather, it should be read as essentially *Zeitroman* engaged in social critique. As such, the only true successors in this tradition are people like Karl Immermann, Theodor Fontane and Thomas Mann (see 327-329). Michael Hadley mostly agrees with von Wiese and considers Heinrich von Spieß more importantly than Schiller in establishing the tradition of the *Geisterroman* in the 1790's (*Undiscovered Genre*, 86).

converge under the sign of *suspense*. The novel entertains because it engages readers' attention through narrative suspense. Eberhard, Kant and others also engage their readers' minds and additionally seek to activate reason through suspense; they ask readers to temporarily suspend their normal understanding of the world by presenting them with ostensibly supernatural phenomena. For these Enlightenment thinkers, suspense had a pedagogical purpose; the aim in forcing a suspension of assumptions was to prompt a resolution of that suspense in the form of a demystifying explanation. For Cagliostro, however, suspense generated through a manufactured confrontation with the supernatural had an obfuscating intent. Like Kant and Eberhard, he generated suspense to create a demand for resolution, but the resolutions he guided his audience toward were not truthful explanations. The explanation of the inexplicable is now replaced by a story whose plot is determined by the scheming minds who operate from behind the scenes. As suspense can propel one equally toward knowledge or delusion, it can be considered a perilous formal technique, yielding no inherent guarantee of allegiance to a particular system of values. For someone like Schiller, concerned with the conditions under which an individual can develop as an autonomous subject, the promised value of reason must be called into question insofar as it relies on the perilous technique of suspense.

This chapter will explore the perils of suspense as explored in *Der Geisterseher*. A review of the text's background and publication history will highlight the challenges of working with a fragment and establish the centrality of suspense as a technique and theme of the narrative. This chapter will then present an analysis of the Prince, using close readings of

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[189] Schiller heard about Cagliostro and read about his deceptions not from the proceedings of the 1785 Paris trial, but from the accounts of Elisa von der Recke in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, which were published around the same time. The origins of Schiller's novel have at this point been well-documented and are fairly well-known. See Adalbert von Hanstein, *Wie entstand Schillers* Geisterseher*?* (Berlin: Alexander Kuncket, 1903).

descriptive passages to argue that he cannot be dismissed as a failed Enlightenment subject or victim of poor education.[190] In many instances, he adopts an appropriately skeptical stance and exercises seemingly healthy processes of reasoning in the face of things he does not understand. The weakness that precipitates his downfall lies in the process of reasoning itself, demonstrated most clearly by tracing the motif of the key [*Schlüssel*] throughout the text. As Lilliane Weissberg has rightly noted, the key, as both an object (the key to a chest) and metaphorical figure (the key to a riddle or puzzle), serves as symbol to the seemingly opposing concepts of *Aufklärung* and *Betrug*.[191] By ensnaring the Prince *through*, and not *in spite of*, his exercise of reason, the Armenian turns him into a prop in the execution of his plans. In his encounter with the Greek woman, the Prince actually becomes like a magic lantern. When he sees a woman in a church and subconsciously recognizes her as the painted image of the Madonna with which he had previously fallen in love, it is as though he uses the painted image from his memory as a slide, projecting it into the world and feeling a strong attraction to the woman in the church as a result. The Armenian uses the tools of Enlightenment pedagogy—foremost among them the empty formal principle of suspense—to seize hold of the Prince's perceptual apparatus.[192]

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[190] A number of works address Schiller's *Geisterseher* as a "failed" or "reverse" *Bildungsroman*, the most recent being Edward K. Maier, "Gothic Horror, the Windowless Monad, and the Self: The Limits of Enlightenment in Schiller's *Der Geisterseher*", *Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für Germanistik* (39:3-4), 2006, 243-255. The problem with such a designation lies in understanding the valence of negativity applied to the word *Bildung*. By my reading, the "negative" or "anti-" modifier to *Bildung* would necessarily refer to a problem inherent in the concept; alternatively, one could understand a "negative" or "anti-" *Bildung* story as one in which a character simply develops in all the wrong ways, or fails to follow the correct course. *Anton Reiser* could be serve as an example for this sort of anti-*Bildungsroman*; something fundamentally different, and much more pessimistic, is at work in *Der Geisterseher*.

[191] Weissberg, 108.

[192] Weissberg accurately observes: "Die Laterne [magica] selbst nämlich, der Apparat, der Geister technisch reproduzierbar macht, gilt auch als die Metapher, die die menschliche

Textual Background, Editions and Scholarship

Both the plot of the story and the publication history of the text's various editions make *Der Geisterseher* a complicated topic for discussion. To employ a Gothic metaphor befitting the subject matter, one can risk becoming lost in the labyrinth of the details while missing a sense of the whole. Though the machinations of the Armenian and his shadowy organization pale in comparison to the indescribably complex plotting of popular texts inspired by Schiller, such as Carl Grosse's *Der Genius* (1790-1793) and Karl F. Kahlert's *Der Geisterbanner* (1792), one can hardly call the story "simple." Many works of scholarship on the text avoid some complication by mentioning the text's fragmentary character without addressing the problem of its various editions. Though understandable, this approach creates a historical problem, as the definitive edition of the text, which contains new material and places various textual elements in a new order, dates to 1798, roughly ten years after its original publication and its period of greatest literary cultural and popular relevance. Particularly because *Der Geisterseher* resounded so loudly in the culture at the time of its publication, rapidly inspiring waves of imitators and translations in both England and Germany, it is peculiar that, as scholars, we often read a different version than the one read by most of Schiller's contemporaries. By 1798, the trend that *Der Geisterseher* inspired was all but passé.

Revisiting the complexities of the plot and considering the intricacies of the text's publication history provides a first opportunity to highlight the centrality of suspense as a formal

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Wahrnehmung beschreiben soll." Anticipating Stefan Andriopoulos's later work, she also connects this with Kant's use of the metaphor of the magic lantern in the *Träume* (Weissberg, 112-113). See Stefan Andriopoulos, *Ghostly Apparitions: German Idealism, the Gothic Novel, and Optical Media* (New York: Zone Books, 2013). Though my reading builds off both Weissberg and Andriopoulos, I extend the metaphor by examining precisely how, through the formal medium of suspense, this "perceptual apparatus" is seized and utilized by the Armenian in the episode with the Greek woman.

characteristic of *Der Geisterseher*. For Nicolai, Eberhard and Kant, the confrontation with a ghost produces an ultimately edifying kind of suspense; the unexpected appearance of a seemingly supernatural phenomenon temporarily suspends the categories of normal experience, inciting a process of analysis that contends with and explains the phenomenon. Moritz finds an aesthetic value in the suspense precipitated by an encounter with the supernatural, one that involves lingering in the expansiveness of suspense, rather than immediately resolving it. But all of these examples lack the propulsion of *Der Geisterseher*, which employs suspense first and foremost as a narrative technique. Here, the inner experience of the person who sees the ghost completely overtakes the structure of the reading experience; the cognitive suspense becomes narrative suspense. A supernatural encounter incites the beholder to ask, "What happened? Give me an explanation!" An encounter with *Der Geisterseher* incites a reader to ask, "What happens next? Tell me the story!"

Stripped to its most basic elements, the story goes something like this: a Prince, while traveling through Venice, becomes entangled in the machinations of a secret organization seeking to claim control over Europe by corrupting its monarchs. The agent of this organization, a mysterious figure known simply as the Armenian, orchestrates a series of deceptions designed to claim control over the Prince while also clearing the way for him to ascend to the throne. This plot eventually leads him to Rome, where the narrative breaks off, unfinished. A cursory conclusion, added in an effort to tie up loose ends, outlines the intended trajectory of the Prince's path, which entails a conversion to Roman Catholicism and a plot to assassinate his relative, the only other potential heir to the throne. *Der Geisterseher* unfolds in a combination of *faux*-journal entries and letters, perhaps in an effort to make it seem true. Both journal and letters are part of an imagined collection of papers belonging to the Graf von O—, who accompanies the Prince

during some of his time in Venice. The Graf's written narrative comprises roughly half of the text. Eventually, the Graf must leave Venice, but his friend, the Baron von F—, continues to write to him of the Prince. These letters from the Baron make up the second half of the text. This divides the narrative into roughly two halves, which eventually become Book One and Book Two of the book editions.

Though the formal trappings neatly divide the text in two, the plot actually has three broad movements that correspond to the psychic states of the Prince as he moves along the path that the Armenian lays out for him. Once the Prince and the Graf first meet in Venice, the Armenian begins to draw them into his plot through a series of small but seemingly inexplicable actions: a masked figure foretells the death of the Prince's cousin in a distant city, the Prince and Graf witness an apparent beheading at the hands of a shadowy group of men in the sewers,[193] and the Prince loses the key to his trunk only to have it turn up in a snuff box that he wins in a raffle. Each event heightens the Prince's gullibility and prepares him for the culminating event of this first movement: an elaborately staged séance performed by a man known as the Sicilian. When the authorities capture the Sicilian and the illusion of the séance begins to crumble, the plot moves into its second movement; whereas everything leading up to and including the séance increased the Prince's gullibility, the second movement turns him into a radical skeptic. He

[193] The fake beheading is, for this reading, an outlier, as it is the one example of a fundamentally different form of suspense. According to Wolfgang Trautwein, suspense in *Schauerliteratur* is generally related to one of two questions: (1) Wie wird das Schauergeschehen ablaufen? or (2) Liegt tatsächlich ein Schauergeschehen vor? The second of those questions can be translated into a more or less purely intellectual experience of suspense, as it addresses the reality of the phenomenon, rather than the dread of how things will proceed. Though dread becomes something of a factor in the Sicilian's séance, it is layered underneath the primary experience of epistemological uncertainty, which addresses the reality of the phenomena presented. The beheading is unique because it is purely an experience of dread, with no element of epistemological uncertainty. As a result, it ends up being bracketed out in this reading of the novel.

interrogates the Sicilian and picks apart each detail of the séance, then moves on to analyze every one of the supposedly supernatural characteristics of the Armenian. The resulting feeling of intense skepticism causes the Prince to turn to a libertine lifestyle; he becomes involved in a secret society of dubious morality and begins to gamble irresponsibly. Here the plot shifts into its final movement, which leads to the Prince's conversion and ascension to the throne. Deeply in debt and morally bankrupt, the Prince happens to see a Greek woman praying in a church one day, and she reminds him of a painting of the Madonna that he had wanted to buy. He immediately falls in love with her and becomes irrationally obsessed, not realizing that she, too, works as an agent of the Armenian; the Prince's obsession with her was—like everything else—all part of the plan.

A cycle of suspense and resolution propels the narrative and defines the gesture of these three general movements of the plot. In the first movement, the Armenian's and Sicilian's deceptions, which appear supernatural, suspend the normal parameters of the Prince's worldview, establishing an open sequence that begs for resolution. Every major event of this first part goes unexplained. The second movement begins with a series of answers to the questions of the first part. Through an interrogation of the captured Sicilian, the Prince manages to resolve the suspense established by his deceptions. But the extremity of his resulting skepticism introduces a new form of suspense. By completely overturning the Princes' belief in any sort of foundational truth, the resolution of the initial suspense established in the first movement throws the Prince's life into complete disarray. With no grounding of any sort, the normal conditions of his very existence become suspended. This existential suspense dominates in the second movement and its resolution comes only through further interventions on the part of the Armenian. By subtly directing the Prince's attention towards the Greek woman in the church, the Armenian brings

about the resolution of the Prince's existential suspense through a conversion to Roman Catholicism. Precisely how the Armenian manages these maneuvers will receive more in-depth treatment in the close readings of the text later in this chapter. For now, it suffices to recognize, broadly speaking, the central role that suspense plays in propelling and defining the plot.

This compelling plot, however, exhibits variation between its editions that can alter one's reading of it in subtle or significant ways. Most of this carefully crafted story first appeared in four parts in the pages of *Thalia* between 1787 and 1789. The first book edition was also published in 1789, but that edition already substantially changed the text through the addition of an introduction and a brief conclusion. As it turns out, no single edition contains all of the elements that, in its various forms, comprise the text. After the first book edition appeared in print, Schiller penned another short piece for *Thalia* that he titled "Der Abschied. Ein Fragment aus dem zweiten Bande des Geistersehers." This contained a story about a coded letter told by Civitella, a character who loans the Prince a significant amount of money during his libertine period. That narrative—itself an unfinished fragment, as the contents of the letter are never revealed—was eventually integrated into the story through the interpolation of a new letter from the Baron to the Graf, between letters six and seven of Book Two (Civitella's narrative became the new seventh letter). This change did not occur until the third edition of the book, published in 1798. This third edition also removed a significant portion of the Baron's fourth letter in Book Two. That elided text came to be known as the "Philosophische Gespräch," and most critics agree that this extended philosophical aside interrupts the flow of the narrative and that Schiller rightly excluded it from the book editions. Other scholars, however, have taken great interest in that *philosophische Gespräch* and have considered the merits of its argument within the context of Schiller's other philosophical writings from the period. Many separately published editions of

Der Geisterseher still follow the 1798 edition as the definitive version. The *Nationalausgabe* of Schiller's works includes the *philosophische Gespräch* without explanation following the conclusion of Book Two, a practice also adopted by several stand-alone book editions in both English and German. One might argue, in favor of this approach, that it provides the scholar with the greatest access to everything Schiller ever wrote under the heading "Der Geisterseher." Its obvious shortcoming lies in its lack of historical specificity. Prior to 1798, no one would ever have seen the text in this form.

By considering the elements of *Der Geisterseher* as separate but interrelated texts, this paper addresses the ultimate unity of the project while also identifying it primarily as a text of the late 1780's. By the 1789 edition, more or less everything that would eventually make up (or later be left out of) *Der Geisterseher* had been published, either in book form or in the pages of *Thalia*. When Matthias Luserke-Jaqui claims that scholars should never treat the work as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*,[194] he is right according to the letter of the law, though not the spirit. The 1798 edition presents an apparently cohesive, if fragmentary work, but it did not exist in this form for the first ten years—the period of time when it also exerted its greatest influence on literary culture. The text's original readers might not have read this third edition, which calls into question the wisdom of treating it as definitive; treating the 1798 edition of the novel fragment as a *Gesamtkustwerk* certainly misses the point entirely. At the same time, one should not dismiss the idea of "Der Geisterseher" as a unified literary project with a set of thematic preoccupations and prevalent motifs that bridge the gaps between the *Thalia* publications and the first book edition. Given the text's immediate impact on the literary culture of the late 1780's and early 1790's, it is important not to lose sight of the project as one that was essentially complete by

[194] See Matthias Luserke-Jaqui, editor, *Schiller-Handbuch* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2005).

1789. The *Frankfurter Ausgabe* of Schiller's works most effectively enables this approach, as it presents the text in three main pieces: the main body in the *Thalia* edition, grouped into the two parts that made up the first book edition (nine letters rather than ten in Book Two, with the *philosophische Gespräch* integrated into letter four); Civitella's story ("Der Abschied") as a separate text; and the introduction and conclusion added in the first book edition as a separate text. All citations in this chapter follow the *Frankfurter Ausgabe*; when significant differences separate the *Thalia* and book editions, brief footnotes explain the distinctions.

All this discussion of journal and book editions might amount to little more than unnecessary philological detail, if it did not also allow for further reflection on the importance of suspense to the work. The *Thalia* edition most clearly uses suspense in its relationship to its readers. The first part published in *Thalia* breaks off in the middle of suspenseful, bewildering events; the Sicilian's séance is underway, an unexpected second apparition appears, and the Armenian intervenes without warning. The final sentence of that first part cuts off practically in mid-motion: "Der Sizilianer drehte sich um, sah ihm genauer ins Gesicht, tat einen lauten Schrei und stürzte zu seinen Füßen" (*FA* 7:606).[195] The interruption of the story in mid-action, as the Sicilian falls to the feet of some unidentified powerful figure, manifests suspense literally in the Sicilian's incomplete gesture. This suspended gesture represents *in nuce* the state of the text as a whole at the end of this first published section of the *Thalia* edition. None of the innumerable mysteries presented in the first part have found any resolution. As a way of ensuring reader interest—or, to reference Barthes, as a way of establishing close contact with his readership—Schiller cuts off the first part of the text at the point of maximum suspense.

[195] The *Berliner-Ausgabe* is helpful, as it indicates in the text that the first *Thalia* volume breaks off here. The *Frankfurter-Ausgabe* disguises the break slightly in the text, but makes note of it in the *Kommentar* section (see *FA* 7:1053, note 606,18).

The world responded with a clamoring demand for the second part; as the publication of *Der Geisterseher* incited suspense that required resolution, it paralleled certain elements of the text. While listening to the Sicilian's account of how he accomplished the deceptions of the séance, the Prince cannot help but interrupt excitedly with a question or a guess about what will come next; his brief interruptions conclude with an imperative: "Aber fahren Sie nur fort—fahren Sie fort—" (*FA* 7:630). Everyone who read *Der Geisterseher* with interest in the pages of *Thalia* understood how the Prince felt and heartily echoed this phatic statement, affirming the connection between storyteller and audience through a demand for resolution. The Prince's need for an explanation of the supernatural begins to blend together with the audience's desire for more of the narrative. The Prince asks to see the spirit of his old friend during the séance because he wants to learn the end of a sentence fragment spoken by that friend on his deathbed: "In einem Kloster auf der flandrischen Grenze lebt eine—" (*FA* 7:602). Like that unfinished sentence, Schiller's text remained an unfinished fragment, despite the audience's demands that Schiller conjure an ending.

My reading of *Der Geisterseher* builds on some existing critical perspectives while departing from others. A significant amount of scholarship on *Der Geisterseher* addresses, if indirectly and sometimes unconsciously, the reasons Schiller never finished the novel. His letters clearly document his distaste for the work, which he reportedly undertook mostly as a way of making some money; but this pat explanation ignores some of the work's pointed implications that could arguably have made Schiller uncomfortable enough to set the work aside. In *Gemeinsame Tagträume*, Hanns Sachs puts Schiller on the psychoanalyst's couch and assesses how the story may have called up unsettling, repressed truths about Schiller's relationship to his

father and to women.[196] In their respective writings on *Der Geisterseher*, Gail Hart and Scott Abbot both assess the ways that the novel critiques itself in the process of its unfolding, though each does so from a slightly different perspective.[197] From different angles, Hart and Abbot both consider the contradictory nature of a wildly popular text about a man taken in by a charlatan's scheme, that thematizes the dangerous "lure of entertainment" even as it allures and entertains its fans. Schiller could only escape this unintentional performative contradiction, so says Abbott, by refusing to finish the novel. Others have contextualized the work in Schiller's career and noted its position on the boundary between periods of intense literary production and intense philosophical engagement; if the increasingly philosophical preoccupations of *Der Geisterseher* offer a clear indication of Schiller's evolving interests, perhaps he simply lost interest in narrative altogether. Though the *philosophische Gespräch* may have interrupted the suspense and narrative propulsion of the novel, it would seem to anticipate, both in form and in aspects of its content, the philosophical works that Schiller wrote shortly after ceasing work on the novel. For the sake of the story, the philosophizing would have to go, but when it came down to a choice between exciting story and *philosophische Gespräch*, Schiller eventually directed his attention to the latter, leaving the former an unfinished fragment.

Though biographical contextualization has the unfortunate consequence of treating narrative suspense and philosophical consideration as mutually exclusive characteristics of *Der Geisterseher,* the two cannot be easily disentangled upon further consideration. Even

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[196] See Hanns Sachs, *Gemeinsame Tagträume* (Leipzig: Inernationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1924), 39-45.

[197] Gail Hart, "Save the Prince: Schiller's *Geisterseher* and the Lure of Entertainment", in: *Goethe Yearbook* 18:1 (2011), 245-257; Scott Abbott, *Fictions of Freemasonry: Freemasonry and the German Novel*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991).

Weissberg's excellent reading of the novel, which admirably and self-consciously extends its reading of *Der Geisterseher* beyond the bounds of the narrative in an effort to consider its relationship to Schiller's aesthetic theory and to Kant,[198] consequently glosses over some of the complexities about the problematic interrelation of storytelling technique and philosophical content in the text. Narrative and philosophical inquiry are staged as two possible modes of engagement that are more or less exclusive of one another. According to Weissberg, philosophical conclusions or consequences thus appear as the result of a narrative; eventually, the philosophical preoccupations overtake the narrative preoccupations and Schiller abandons the story. By considering the centrality of suspense as a narrative technique and theme in Schiller's piece, this chapter builds on the insightful work done by Abbot, Hart and Weisberg and argues that *Der Geisterseher* explores suspense as a threat to the autonomous subject—whether used for purposes of manipulation or Enlightenment pedagogy. This reading suggests that deception does not come from misguided thinking, but from the misapplication of reason within heteronymously-defined parameters. Given the importance of suspense to both the narrative structure and philosophical content of *Der Geisterseher,* this chapter will analyze the concept in both respects. The narrative invites an integrated critique of suspense as both a literary technique and as an aspect of the reasoning process.

Suspense becomes an unreliable pedagogical tool if it facilitates deception as readily as enlightenment; smuggled, as it were, into the trustworthy processes of analytical reason, suspense introduces the potential for corruption originating from inside the Enlightenment system, spawned by inside agents wielding suspense as a manipulative rather than pedagogical tool. In the 1780's, analogous concerns were held regarding the potential internal corruption of

[198] Cf. Weissberg 120-124.

Europe's secret societies, despite their grounding in Enlightenment principles. The authors of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, in particular, were concerned about the influence of Jesuits within the various lodges of the Freemasons, and about the Catholic order of Illuminati in Bavaria in particular. These concerns contrast with the prior faith that had been placed in the educational and moral values of secret societies. As early as the 1770's, in his text *Ernst und Falk*, Lessing had recognized secret societies as a keystone for establishing a class of Enlightened bourgeois. Reinhart Koselleck, in his now famous *Kritik und Krise* (1959), elaborated on the role of secret societies as institutions of individual and collective moral development within the context of an Absolutist system that had excluded morality from the political sphere. The widespread concern about conspiracies within these societies in 1780's amounted to an anxiety about the assumed autonomy and apolitical nature of their utopic moral aspirations. Suddenly, it seemed possible that the high ideals and guarded secrecy of these institutions did not guarantee their safety from the influence of dubious agents who sought to direct their activities in unwanted directions.

This anxiety about secret society conspiracies obviously plays out on an external level in *Der Geisterseher*, but also on an internal one, through the analogous corruption from within of the Prince's cognitive processes. The Armenian, as the powerful agent of a secret organization, embodies the questionable integrity of such institutions and evokes the generalized anxiety that was held about their activity, both known and unknown, in the social and political spheres of Europe. The secret society that the Prince eventually joins, the Buncentauro, is a similarly overt allusion to the horrible corruption that was perceived to have gripped the Masonic lodges by the late eighteenth century. More significant for this reading, however, is the analogous internal corruption that takes hold of the Prince's process of reason and turns him into a pawn in another man's scheme; the internal corruption suspected in Europe's secret societies plays out here

within a single individual. Reason—itself an institution of the Enlightenment—proves just as susceptible as secret societies to corrupting influence.

The Prince: A Failed *Aufklärer* or the Victim of External Forces?

One can too easily malign the protagonist of Schiller's *Geisterseher*, known simply as "the Prince," for enabling his own downfall by possessing a strong predilection to believe in the supernatural. One of the most famous and oft-cited passages highlights the Prince's unfortunate weakness: "Mit der Geisterwelt in Verbindung zu stehen, was ehedem seine Lieblingsschwärmerei gewesen" (*FA* 7:599). The very idea of having a "favorite infatuation" [*Lieblingsschwärmerei*] lends itself to parody—among his various silly fantasies, a connection with the spirit world evidently tops the list. If one defines his character from this descriptor alone, the Prince comes across as a fool. Small wonder that he should be led astray! Other passages further support this reading. When the Graf introduces the Prince, he explains that "eine schwärmerische Melancholie herrschte in seiner Gemütsart," and "in seine Phantasiewelt verschlossen, war er sehr oft ein Fremdling in der wirklichen" (*FA* 7:588). This problematic inner life results from a "bigotte, knechtische Erziehung" (*FA* 7:648). The Graf speaks of the Prince's family on a few occasions, and never with anything but contempt. Specifically, he faults them for failing to instill in the Prince any grounding in sound principle. As a child, the Prince—a "Protestant [...] durch Geburt, nicht nach Untersuchung" (*FA* 7:589)—developed an irrational fear of religious figures based on an upbringing that foregrounded the negative, punitive aspects of religion rather than offering positive images of religious authority (see *FA* 7:647-649). This unfortunate inheritance, which the Graf refers to as the "Erbkrankheit in seiner Familie," leads to the "bizarreste Mischung" in the Prince's inner life: a mixture of "einem respektvollen Glauben

und blinder Furcht in seinem Kopf und Herz" (*FA* 7:648). Such a Prince has little hope of developing into an autonomous subject, as he lacks the tools that would instill in him the capacity for right thinking. The Graf pronounces the Prince's fate early in the text: "Niemand war mehr dazu geborn, sich beherrschen zu lassen, ohne schwach zu sein" (*FA* 7:589). The Prince is destined to be a subject determined heteronymously, by external forces.

This characterization of the Prince implies that heteronymous direction comes only after the failure of autonomous self-direction. Because the Prince is susceptible to *Schwärmerei*, his self-development fails, leaving him open to external direction; in the absence of an internal directive force, external forces can move in—this is one way to interpret the logic of the text. But *Der Geisterseher* has consistently proven to be difficult and confusing because of how it blends heteronymous control and autonomous self-direction. It calls into question whether these two possible paths are mutually exclusive. Instead of forcing a choice between options—either one determines the course of one's own development or one's actions are liable to be controlled by external forces—*Der Geisterseher* introduces a third option: what if an external force could control the way an individual chooses to direct his own actions? What if apparently autonomous self-direction could be staged within a set of heteronymously-determined boundaries?

Despite the Graf's complaints about the Prince's melancholic *Schwärmerei*, external forces are clearly operative and directing the course of his life from the outset. The Graf's actions often drive the plot forward more than the Prince's—the Graf tells the servants where to find him on the night the fateful letter arrives informing of the death of the Prince's cousin; and the Graf also mistakenly calls out the Prince's name in the café, identifying him and leading to their encounter with the Inquisitors in the sewers. Certain language choices also indicate the staging of the Prince's existence within a context outside his control. As they ride down the river

on the day of the séance, the Prince and Graf are surrounded by a landscape that offers up "das herrlichste *Schauspiel* von der Welt" (*FA* 7:595, my emphasis). In the café, other men refer to the Prince as "diesem Balordo"; a parenthetical note explains that Balordo is a "Figur der italienischen Komödie."[199] This echoes language that the Prince uses when encouraging the Graf to accompany him on walks through Venice to look for the Armenian: "Mich verlangt doch nach der Entwicklung deiser Komödie" (*FA* 7:590). Using language taken from a theatrical context, the text stages the Prince's situation as determined by externally-defined boundaries.

Though the Prince may appear to engage autonomous reason in his response to the Sicilian's séance, his analytical processes have actually been staged and directed by external forces. The Sicilian's séance generates suspense in a way that opens the door for manipulation. This occurs first on a superficial level, as the resolution of one mystery becomes an excuse to introduce a second. The Prince requests to see the spirit of his old friend in order to learn from him the end of a statement left unfinished, held as a suspended, open sequence: "In einem Kloster an der flandrischen Grenze lebt eine—" (*FA* 7:602). When the second apparition provides the conclusion of this statement and resolves this mystery, it only prompts further questions from the Prince: "Kann ich die auf dieser Welt noch einen Dienst erzeigen?" he asks, addressing himself now to the spirit's ontological suspense, rather than the suspense created by the mystery of the unfinished statement (*FA* 7:606). The ghost cryptically tells him to think only of himself, and then goes on to add, as further explanation: "In Rom wirst du es erfahren" (*FA* 7:606). The Prince, currently in Sicily, will not end up in Rome until much later in Book Two, but external forces have already laid out the course that his life will follow. The process that gets

[199] Cf. *FA* 7:592 and also the note 592,24 on *FA* 7:1051. In the *Thalia* edition, Schiller incorrectly wrote "Bakardo" and corrected this error, with the corresponding explanatory note, beginning in the first book edition.

him to Rome relies on the Prince's exercise of reason to analytically deconstruct the ostensibly supernatural mysteries of this same séance. He must practice this apparently self-directed autonomy, however, within the finite boundaries defined by external forces.

This entanglement of autonomy and external influence helps explain the descriptive passages of *Der Geisterseher* that paint the Prince as more than a helpless *Schwärmer.* Even the end of that famous passage, for example, complicates the picture of him:

> Mit der Geisterwelt in Verbindung zu stehen, war ehedem seine Lieblingsschwärmerei gewesen, und seit jener ersten Erscheinung des Armeniers hatten sich alle Ideen wieder bei ihm gemeldet, *die seine reifere Vernunft so lange abgewiesen hatte*. (*FA* 7:599-600, my emphasis)

Evidently, a "more mature sense of reason" [*reifere Vernunft*] has long suppressed the Prince's long-standing desire to connect with the spirit world. Though he may have inherited a family predilection for unhealthy relationships to religious ideals, the Prince does not simply stand out as a superstitious anachronism in the reasonable society of the 1780's. For a significant portion of Book One, particularly after the Sicilian's séance, the Prince actually defends a skeptical perspective against the Graf, who at least momentarily believes in supernatural possibilities. After speaking with the Sicilian, the Graf asks the Prince whether he considers the apparition they saw during the séance genuine. The Prince responds cagily: "Ich leugne nicht, daß ich mich einen Augenblick habe hinreißen lassen Blendwerk für etwas mehr zu halten" (*FA* 7:636-637). Already, the Prince has identified this apparition as a deception, as *Blendwerk*. Though momentarily taken by the effect, his more mature sense of reason sees through it. The Graf, with a surprised retort, takes a more credulous stance: "Und ich will *den* sehen, der sic hinter diesen Umständen einer ähnlichen Vermutung erwehren kann" (*FA* 7:637). The circumstances presented to the audience force the Graf to consider the reality of the spirit world, an intellectual weakness that he has elsewhere criticized in his characterizations of the Prince. This establishes

the positions that the two will hold for the remainder of the conversation. The Graf seems generally convinced of the astonishing things they have learned about the Armenian, while the Prince persists in his attempts to further unravel the details and reconstruct material explanations for what they witnessed. By resisting the lure of the apparition, examining and analyzing its potential causes, and identifying a natural explanation, the Prince holds firm to what one might call an Enlightenment process, further calling into question whether one can rightly fault him for bringing about his own downfall by failing to exercise autonomy of reason.

Confusingly, a Prince who has already been identified as a *Schwärmer* takes on the role of *Aufklärer*. The man identified by the Graf as most susceptible to deception exercises apparent autonomy of reason in the face of unbelievable circumstances. The Graf shows an inclination to believe in the ostensibly supernatural powers of the Armenian: "Nach dem, was man uns eben von dem Armenier erzählt hat, sollte sich der Glaube an seiner Wundergewalt eher vermehrt als vermindert haben" (*FA* 7:637). The Prince, however, remains unconvinced by the Sicilian's testimony; he considers the Sicilian a "Nichtswürdiger" and insists that "das Zeugnis eines Nichtswürdigen" cannot present serious opposition to "Wahrheit und gesunde Vernunft" (*FA* 7:637). Serving as the mouthpiece for the values of truth and healthy reason, the Prince responds to the situation with a few rhetorical questions that Eberhard could have written:

> Wollen Sie lieber ein *Wunder* glauben, als eine *Unwahrscheinlichkeit* zugeben? Lieber die Kräfte der Natur umstürzen, als eine künstliche und weniger gewöhnliche Kombinationen dieser Kräfte sich gefallen lassen? (*FA* 7:641, emphasis in original)

Though he tends towards *Schwärmerei*, the Prince speaks in defense of the laws of nature, rather than sacrificing those laws to a belief in the supernatural. He articulates the oppositions of contemporary popular science and philosophy, even though he may have the wrong sort of *Gemütszustand*.

It oversimplifies the text to argue that it portrays a man whose stunted inner development precipitates his downfall by leaving him open to deception. The Prince may be a *Schwärmer*, his family may have engendered his early irrational attitudes, and his thinking may be confined by heteronymously-set parameters, but he also exhibits resistance to deception and an analytical response to ostensibly mystical phenomena that should identify him as an *Aufklärer*. Through the exercise of truth and "gesunde Vernunft," the Prince effectively deconstructs both the Sicilian's and the Armenian's tricks. He does what any practitioner of autonomous reason should do. It even accords with what the narrator, together with the Englishman, Lord Seymour, had planned as a way to cure the Prince of his unhealthy attraction to the supernatural. Prior to the Sicilian's séance, when he had just begun discussing spirits with the Prince, Lord Seymour buttonholes the narrator: "Ich beklage, daß [der Prinz] sich mit einem Betrüger einläßt" (*FA* 7:600). This cleverly named man—Lord See More—recognizes the Sicilian's deception early and devises a plan to expose it. Anticipating that the Sicilian will demand money before performing his act of conjuring, Lord Seymour starts a collection to cover the expense. Forcing the Sicilian to conjure will force him into the open: "Das bricht ihm den Hals und öffnet Ihrem Prinzen den Augen," Lord Seymour assures the Graf (*FA* 7:601). This strategy accords with the Enlightenment approach to the supernatural as exemplified by Eberhard, Hennings and Nicolai: let the phenomenon appear such that, through its appearance, one can confront it, deconstruct it, and explain it as a material, not a supernatural, occurrence.

Lord Seymour may intend the Prince's Enlightenment, but a surprising turn of events during the collection reveals the possibility of an additional outcome intended for the Prince. When the collection plate comes to the Russian officer, he makes a shockingly large contribution:

> den Russen besonders schien unsrer Verschlag ungemein zu interessieren, er legt eine Banknote von hundert Zeichnen auf den Teller—eine Verschwendung, über welche der Engländer erstaunte. (*FA* 7:601)

Lord Seymour receives no explanation for this unexpected expenditure, nor does the text revisit this surprising moment. One can only understand why the Russian officer spends so extravagantly when one knows his true identity: the Prince recognizes him later as none other than the Armenian. To decipher the meaning of the officer's sizeable contribution one must connect Lord Seymour's intentions—to ensure that the Sicilian undertakes his conjuring act—with the Prince's realization—that the Russian officer is actually the Armenian. It would seem that the Armenian, like Lord Seymour (or perhaps even more than he), wanted to ensure that the Sicilian's conjuring act happened. But why would the Armenian—the deceiver—want this, if seeing the conjuring act will supposedly precipitate the Prince's *Aufklärung*?

Despite Lord Seymour's assumption that suspense activates reason, the séance indicates that the disorientation of suspense can result as easily in *Betrug* as in *Aufklärung.* Though Lord Seymour certainly does not understand it, he and the Russian officer/Armenian have bet against each other, and the Sicilian's séance serves as the arena of competition. Lord Seymour believes that by forcing the Sicilian to conjure, he can cure the Prince of his attraction to the supernatural. The Armenian also wants the Sicilian to conjure, but for him the séance plays a central role in the Prince's deception. By suspending the normal conditions of life and presenting something ostensibly supernatural, the séance becomes an open space that allows for at least two possible outcomes—*Aufklärung* and *Betrug.* Lord Seymour plays into the Armenian's hands by ignoring the possibility of deception. He believes that engaging in the suspended open sequence of the séance can *only* result in a resolution of Enlightenment. His naïveté about the potential dangers of suspense may even play a greater role in determining the Prince's fate than the Prince's

tendency towards *Schwärmerei*. His error also begins to draw out the central theme of *Der Geisterseher*, which is not the dangers of unsound reason and incomplete education, but the far more troubling proximity of *Aufklärung* and *Betrug*, or the intimate connections both have to suspense. These two possibilities arise and compete with one another in moments of suspense, when conditions establish an open sequence that demands resolution. Lord Seymour sees only one path out of suspense, because he focuses on and has faith in the autonomous operation of reason within that open sequence. The Armenian enters as a force that, by heteronymously determining the conditions of the suspended sequence, can indirectly control the apparently autonomous exercise of reason. Having established the potential dangers of suspense, *Der Geisterseher* then further interrogates the distance between *Aufklärung* and *Betrug*: what separates these two outcomes from one another? Just how opposing are they? The next section of this chapter explores the disturbing possibility that they are not so distant at all.

"Zwei Schlüssel auf einmal!"

If Lord Seymour and the Armenian represent the divergence of *Aufklärung* and *Betrug* as the two possibilities that emerge from the open sequence of the Sicilian's séance, those two concepts converge when they are both linked to the symbol of the *Schlüssel*. As a symbolic motif, *Schlüssel* recurs many times throughout the text, and is generally metaphorically linked to the action of decoding. A key is required to open a locked box or decode a coded message and so, too, to "unlock" ostensibly supernatural phenomena and expose their secrets and explanations. The narrator's passage introducing the text already contains a mention of such a key, used to decode the hidden meaning of his narrative:

> Den wenigen, welche von einem gewissen politischen Vorfalle unterrichtet sind, wird [die Begebenheit, die hier erzählt wird] [...] einen willkommenen Aufschluß darüber

> geben; und auch ohne diesen *Schlüssel* wird sie den übrigen, als in Beitrag zur Geschichte des Betrugs und der Verirrungen des menschlichen Geistes, vielleicht wichtig sein. (my emphasis)

In other words, the ensuing text can only be decoded with a piece of "key" extra-textual, political knowledge, known only to a few. A significant portion of the early scholarship on the novel dedicated itself to finding this very key. Though Adalbert von Hanstein's 1903 monograph has more or less settled the matter, identifying the text's antecedents in Prince Eugen's response to Elise von der Recke, Hanstein also summarizes at least four other possible extra-textual figures that he and others had considered. Sorting out to prove which of these multiple keys properly decoded the message posed no small challenge—it took Hanstein a whole book to do so.

This early connotation of the *Schlüssel* as an interpretive tool may generate an overestimation of its efficacy and reliability. The *Schlüssel* is established as a symbol for knowledge, but it may also be a false ally in the interpretive act, leading one into confusion, instead; decoding the text and gaining knowledge from it requires the key, but depending on the key one chooses, different knowledge results. Though Schiller may not have anticipated the fact that people would generate so many different guesses as to the underlying political circumstances referenced in the introduction, the narrator nevertheless hints at the limits of knowledge promised by the key. Very few people are aware of the required political incident to begin with ("den wenigen, welche von einem gewissen politischen Vorfalle unterrichtet sind"), and the text offers no internal markers, beyond broad character definitions and circumstances, that allow others to discover this "key." To most, the text will remain forever unread and encoded, like the letter in Civitello's narrative. Even if one does decode it, there can be no way of knowing for certain whether one has arrived at the correct meaning. The narrator alludes to that as well: "denn wenn diese Blätte in die Welt treten, bin ich nicht mehr." With the narrator's

promised death, the secret of this *Schlüssel*—like the mysterious end of a sentence half-uttered on a deathbed—will remain hidden forever.

The knowledge initially promised by the symbol of the *Schlüssel* is complicated by its inaccessibility and multiplicity. In his competition with the Russian officer/Armenian on behalf of the Prince, Lord Seymour makes two naïve assumptions; he assumes the singularity of reason as "key" to resolving the Prince's suspense, and he assumes that use of this *Schlüssel* will guarantee *Aufklärung*. He does not see that the outcome of the unlocking/decoding process depends utterly on which key one uses. The Sicilian and Armenian, on the other hand, understand this implicitly, and they secure their influence on the Prince by providing him with the wrong key, a *Gemütszustand* primed to analyze the séance in their desired way. The Sicilian and Armenian meddle with the Prince's key literally before figuratively. On the morning prior to the séance, the Prince discovers that the key [*Schlüssel*] to his trunk has gone missing. When it turns up unexpectedly inside a snuffbox he wins in a raffle, its surprise reappearance shocks both the Prince and the Graf. Together with the Armenian's strange prediction of the death of the Prince's cousin and the disturbing beheading that the Prince and Graf witness, this inexplicable incident with the key makes the Prince feel more open to accepting unusual or supernatural events. The Sicilian later confesses that he orchestrated this prank for just this reason—he wanted to put the Prince in an appropriate *Gemütszustand* for the upcoming séance. Liliane Weissberg accurately identifies the *Schlüssel* as a motif around which *Aufklärung* and *Betrug* converge; linked earlier to the analytical decoding process (*Aufklärung*), the *Schlüssel* now becomes a prop of deception (*Betrug*).

When the Sicilian and Armenian steal and return the Prince's *Schlüssel*, they transform it into an object of deception that still, nevertheless, looks identical to the object symbolically

associated with "unlocking" knowledge; layered with these meanings, the *Schlüssel* could even be understood as a symbol for deception disguised as Enlightenment. These "key" events take on significance in what they foreshadow, as well; just as the Sicilian and Armenian's manipulation of the Prince's *Gemütszustand* relies on his surprising repossession of his key, their further manipulations of him rely on his (apparently) autonomous use of reason (of the *Schlüssel*). This convergence of *Aufklärung* and *Betrug* around the key motif occurs on the levels of plot and metaphor. In the plot, the mysterious circumstances of the key's return make the Prince susceptible to further manipulation; metaphorically, the return of the key represents the integral role that analytical decoding (*Aufklärung*) will play in the Armenian's plans (*Betrug*). The Armenian wants the Prince to have the key; he needs him to exercise (pseudo-)autonomous reason in the face of spectacular phenomena. This metaphorical possibility does not occur to Lord Seymour, who believes that the reasoning process is absolute, not relative, and independent of outside influence, not susceptible to it. "Zwei Schlüssel auf einmal!" the Graf will later exclaim, as he and the Prince discuss the Armenian's apparently supernatural doings. Lord Seymour cannot anticipate the possibility that reason has various applications, not all of which result in the freedom of Enlightenment. He believes that when the Prince applies reason, he will progress toward *Aufklärung;* the Armenian knows that when the Prince applies reason within heteronymously-determined parameters, he may sink into *Betrug.* In both scenarios, reason serves a purpose, though the two purposes are diametrically opposed.

Once the Armenian and his agents return the key to the Prince, the *Schlüssel* becomes a recurrent figure of his speech, seeming to suggest a change in the form of his thoughts (both literally and figuratively). In this discussion between the Graf and the Prince about the Sicilian and the Armenian, *Schlüssel* recurs many times as the keyword and central concept: "einen

natürlichen Schlüssel," "zwei Schlüssel auf einmal," "der Schlüssel zu allen übrigen," "der Schlüssel zu dem Wunder," "der Schlüssel zu seinen Wundern." Taken out of context, these fragments illustrate the centrality of the motif. But which symbolic register of the *Schlüssel* is operative here—does it indicate the Prince's *Aufklärung* or foreshadow his *Betrug?* Both Lord Seymour and the Armenian want the Prince to experience the séance and use the *Schlüssel* (reason) to decode it, though they anticipate decidedly different results. Whose scheme is playing out here; which purpose is the *Schlüssel* serving? In search of "eine natürlichen Schlüssel" and "der Schlüssel zu dem Wunder," the Prince sounds like Eberhard, Hennings or Nicolai. But the key that the Prince uses leads him to disastrous consequences: "ein entlarvter Betrug machte ihm auch die Wahrheit verdächtig." Suspicious of all forms of truth, a radical skeptic in every way, the Prince gives himself over to nihilistic libertinism.

In describing the Prince's disastrous turn towards this libertine lifestyle, the Graf finds occasion to reiterate the failings of the Prince's education and upbringing, as though to imply that these circumstances preconditioned his downfall:

> Er hatte sich in dieses Labyrinth [the Armenian's deceptions] begehen als ein glaubensreicher Schwärmer und er verließ es als Zweifler und zuletzt als ein ausgemachter Freigeist.

But the real significance of the Prince's story thus far is this: he is propelled through a labyrinth of deception by the engine of reason—that *Schlüssel* purported to unlock mysteries and lead to *Aufklärung.* This mechanism of investigation, however, has been appropriated by forces that employ it in their manipulations of the Prince. The more significant failure is not that of the Prince's inner life—not his susceptibility to *Schwärmerei*. After all, his success as a decoder or *Aufklärer* precipitates his fall into radical, libertine skepticism. The failure must lie in reason itself—in its inability to guarantee *Aufklärung* or protect against manipulation. When reason

becomes a purely formal and mechanical operation, it can be anticipated, appropriated, and turned against the man who uses it, controlling him as though from within.

Existential Suspense: The Prince and the Magic Lantern

In the events surrounding the Sicilian's séance, the Armenian subjects the Prince to cognitive suspense; this suspense stimulates the Prince's skepticism and deductive reasoning. He ultimately resolves the open sequence by successfully dismantling each of the Sicilian's and Armenian's deceptions and offering material explanations for each unbelievable occurrence. These solutions resolve the cognitive suspense but cast the Prince into a state of ungrounded libertinism, described by the narrator in language that signals the introduction of a new form of suspense—existential. "Seine Existenz war ein fortdauernder Zustand von Trunkenheit, von schwebenden Taumel," he remarks, describing the Prince at the height of his libertinism (*FA* 7:654). The emphasis on the consistent, enduring nature of this state [*fortdauernd*], which puts him in a drunken haze somewhere between consciousness and unconsciousness [*Trunkenheit*] and floating in a kind of rapture [*schwebenden Taumel*], shows that the Prince's embrace of reason has propelled him into a state of existential suspense. Resolving the suspense of the séance has generated a new open sequence that becomes the very gesture of the Prince's life. He lives in an "immerwährende Anspannung" (*FA* 7:654).

In this state of existential suspense, the Prince experiences a loss of agency. Even in Book One, certain passages likened the Prince's state to that of an actor in a play; most famously, he quotes *Hamlet* to the Graf early on, aligning himself with one of literature's defining figures of epistemological uncertainty. Once his existence enters a state of suspense, however, the Prince begins to think of himself differently, as someone with far less agency even

than an actor. “Ich bin einem Boten gleich, der einen versiegelten Brief an der Ort seiner Bestimmung trägt,” he remarks (*FA* 7:677). The Prince imagines himself an ignorant messenger, fulfilling a functional role with no connection to the content of the message he delivers. As a go-between, this metaphorical messenger is also a liminal figure, operating only in the space between correspondents—after a letter has been sealed, but before it is revealed. The sealed letter in the Prince’s metaphor, whose contents remain forever unknown, anticipates the coded letter that Civitella describes in his story: “Der Brief war mit einem Sphinx versiegelt, ohne Überschrift, und in Chiffern verfasst.” The reader never learns the contents of this sealed and encoded letter, even though Civitella knows what it says. “Ich verstehe mich auf das Dechiffrieren,” he assures his audience (*FA* 7:724); “sein Inhalt war mir so merkwürdig, daß ich ihn auswendig behalten habe” (*FA* 7:725). Though Civitella evidently decodes the letter, he never manages to deliver any knowledge of its contents to his audience; like the messenger in the Prince’s metaphor who will never possess knowledge of the letters he purveys, the readers will never know the content of Civitella’s letter. Access to that body of knowledge is blocked; no amount of decoding will reveal it. Earlier sections of this chapter have traced the Prince’s successful use of reason in the face of “the unknown”; as a practitioner of reason, he has learned to observe, deduce, and decode ostensibly supernatural phenomena—transforming what is unknown and suspenseful into knowable explanations. When doing so propels him into a state of existential suspense, however, he imagines knowledge to be as concealed from him as the contents of Civitella’s letter are from the reader. His metaphor of the messenger seems to imply a lack of connection between his reason (as represented by the mechanical way he performs a limited set of actions) and knowledge, or at least to depict the impotency of his reason. He has become a prisoner of suspense, with no open avenue to its resolution.

Further self-reflection from the Prince reinforces the notion that he is trapped in a state of existential suspense. He describes drawing an "unüberschreitbaren Kreis" around himself, a circle that encloses him fully within the moment and shuts him off from any connection to, or knowledge of, the boundaries of human life that lie on either side—birth and death. Having learned to practice intense skepticism (and at the hand of his deceiver), the Prince now offers general cautionary remarks to all those who might express a curiosity about what lies behind that curtain of death. He might even be speaking to his former, more credulous self:

> […] manche Gaukler nutzen diese allgemeine Neugier, und setzen durch seltsame Vermummungen die gespannten Phantasien in Erstaunen. Eine tiefe Stille herrscht hinter dieser Decke, keine, der einmal dahinter ist, antwortet hinter ihr hervor, alles was man hörte, war ein hohler Widerhall der Frage, als ob man in eine Gruft gerufen hätte. (*FA* 7:676)

When the Prince draws a circle around himself and renounces the possibility of knowing the supernatural, his circle should symbolize immunity to the charlatans who once tempted him with metaphysical access. Wiser now, he knows that one cannot peek behind that curtain that divides life from death and seek answers there, as he did when he asked the Sicilian to call on the spirit of his dead friend. But the image of the circle evokes another drawn earlier by the Sicilian as he prepared for the séance ceremony: "Wir fanden, als wir in den Saal zurück kamen, mit einer Kohle einen weiten Kreis beschrieben, der uns alle zehn bequem fassen konnte" (*FA* 7:603). Without realizing it, the Prince has just described his state of skeptical clarity with imagery that evokes the site of his deception.

Though the Prince has followed a path from credulity to skepticism, the recurrent image of the circle suggests that he has never managed to escape the Armenian's sphere of influence. Initially, the Prince's path appears to point toward freedom and *Aufklärung*; the way he decodes the Sicilian's magic lantern trick conforms to an Enlightenment model. As discussed in both the

introduction to this dissertation and the chapter on Kant, the magic lantern provides a useful metaphor for considering how reason can dismantle ostensibly supernatural phenomena. First, one observes the projected image, the effect produced by the mechanism of the magic lantern; then, one brings up the lights and observes the mechanism, tracing the produced effect back to its source (the slide and the light that shines through it). In his fake séance, the Sicilian used a magic lantern, projecting a slide image of the Prince's friend that he had sketched in advance. At first the séance draws the Prince in, but then he interrogates the Sicilian and learns the mechanism of the trick. Despite his decoding of the Sicilian's magic lantern trick, the Prince does not seem to arrive at the kind of freedom and enlightenment that Lord Seymour might have predicted for him. He dismantles the Sicilian's deceptions, but fails to extricate himself from the Armenian's manipulations, symbolized by the image of the circle.

Trapped in a state of existential suspense and never having left the Armenian's circle, the Prince is helplessly vulnerable to the next stage of manipulations, which involve the further seizure of his cognitive processes. Here, as well, the magic lantern provides a helpful metaphor for understanding the form these new manipulations take. The mechanism of the magic lantern works in a predictable way; when a slide image is inserted and the machine performs its operations, a projection of the image appears on an external surface. In the episode with the Greek woman, the Armenian's manipulations of the Prince work in an analogous way. First, the Armenian has the Greek woman model for the painting of the Madonna. When the Prince wishes to buy the painting, he stores the painted image in his memory. Later, when the identical image—the actual Greek woman—appears outside the Prince, the Armenian' scheme takes effect. Everyone observing the Prince's obsession with the Greek woman understands that his attraction to her stems from her resemblance to the painted image. The image of the Greek

woman is double, like the slide and its projection; she exists within the Prince and is also external to him. Holding the painting within his mind, he becomes like a magic lantern himself—his eye directed toward the external match of his inner image. Eventually, his attraction to this woman will lead him to Rome, where he fulfills the destiny that the Armenian laid out for him by converting to Roman Catholicism and, presumably, assassinating his relative in order to clear his path to the throne. He no longer even appears autonomous; his actions and desires can be clearly traced to heteronymous origins. In the séance, the Prince did appear to exercise autonomous reason; he was presented with an apparition [the *Erscheinung*] and was able, through reason, to discover the painted slide that produced it. In the episode with the Greek woman, however, the order is reversed; the Prince is first presented with the painted Madonna and then perceives her as a haunting presence in the real world. Inside the deception now, the image of the Greek woman planted within his inner apparatus, he lacks the perspective required to unravel the Armenian's scheme. These events move the plot from the second movement to the third, and mark a turning point and intensification of the Armenian's deceptions.

If, as Stefan Andriopolous rightly asserts, the magic lantern functions as a useful pedagogical tool in late eighteenth century Germany, as well as a helpful metaphor for describing the path from suspense, through reason, to *Aufklärung*, then Schiller's *Geisterseher* offers contrasting perspectives on both accounts; his novel exposes the dangers of trusting the magic lantern as an agent of *Auflkärung* and implicitly questions the validity of a metaphor that overestimates the power of reason. Reason entices, promising to expose the hidden causes of ostensibly supernatural phenomena—promising to reveal the mechanism that projects the slide image on the wall as an apparition. But every projector must have a projectionist whose intentions could be deceptive as easily as they could be pedagogical. The lantern's ghostly

projections may stimulate reason, but that reason can be activated for purposes other than *Aufklärung*. The Armenian, for instance, activates the prince's reason so that it can be turned against him, not so it can liberate him; he gives the Prince the key for decoding the séance, but in so doing implants in him a form of reasoning that ultimately compromises his autonomy. In this context, suspense becomes a dangerous and manipulative weapon rather than an educational tool. Just as readers are pulled through the narrative by the cliffhangers of the *Thalia* edition, the Prince is pulled helplessly along by the Armenian's skillful and strategic use of suspense.

Conclusion: The Hinge is Not A Boundary

Der Geisterseher's conflicted attitude toward suspense—embracing it as a literary technique while thematically calling it into question—exemplifies the text's fascinating tension and complexity. Schiller's novel operates on many levels and synthesizes into one narrative many distinct episodes and thematic considerations that might otherwise stand in tension or be isolated into separate works of art. Other authors' imitations and continuations of *Der Geisterseher* illustrate this claim, as they tend to capitalize on one aspect of Schiller's text to the exclusion of others, seldom encompassing the scope of the original. Cajetan Tschink's *Geschichte eines Geistersehers. Aus den Papieren des Mannes mit der eisernen Larve*, for example, focuses almost exclusively on the complex mechanisms that produce the supernatural effects. Clearly, the episode of the Sicilian's séance and its explanation most captivated his imagination. Tschink's other collection of stories of the explained supernatural, entitled *Wundergeschichten samt den Schlüsseln zu ihrer Erklärung* (1792) further betrays his primary preoccupation, even picking up on the motif of the *Schlüssel* that featured so heavily in Schiller's work. Carl Grosse, in his novel *Der Genius: Aus den Papieren des Marquis C* von G***, focuses

on an opposing aspect of Schiller's work, paying most attention to the excitement produced by the experience of uncertainty. Grosse extends the interval between the presentation of a mystery and the revelation of its explanation to an unreasonable degree, and sometimes seems to forget to provide the explanation at all. Reading *Der Genius* becomes an affectively immersive experience, one that downplays the intellectual pleasure of solving the riddle and dwells instead in the "angenehmes Schrecken"[200] of the unsolved mystery. The potential intoxication of that uncertainty may have been what tempted H. H. Ewers to return to *Der Geisterseher* in 1920's and write his own conclusion—in addition to his horror fiction, Ewers experimented heavily with drugs and wrote accounts of his experience of intoxication under their influence. Of the three most famous imitations of Schiller from the 1790's, Karl Kahlert's *Der Geisterbanner* may be the most complex, in that it explores the difference between ghost stories told in an oral setting and those told in writing. Kahlert shows that ghost stories, when told aloud, become potentially dangerous, transgressive acts, as the process of telling becomes itself an act of conjuring. The teller imagines that he again sees the apparitions before his very eyes and relives both the fear and the thrill of that supernatural encounter in the telling. In the cooler, more controlled form of a written account, those same apparitions can then be mastered and explained. This exploration of the tension between oral and written tradition is somewhat unique to Kahlert's novel, which otherwise apes many of the familiar tropes from Schiller and his imitators. Considered together, these diverse imitations of *Der Geisterseher* essentially index the complex and varied considerations that Schiller integrates into his narrative.

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[200] "Angenehmes Schrecken" is Grosse's idiosyncratic translation of "angenehmes Grauen," or "agreeable terror," a term from James Beattie's writings on the sublime. Grosse translated Beattie in the 1780's prior to writing his own lengthy essay *Über das Erhabene* as a 20 year old in 1789. Both Tieck and Schiller were impressed by Grosse's essay—at the time, Grosse was considered a kind of prodigy and was being spoken of as a "second Herder"—which combines ideas mostly from the English theorists of the sublime.

One of the most significant dualities that Schiller brings together in *Der Geisterseher* is that of the rational and the irrational. When writing about this period of literary history in the late 1970's, Michael Hadley summarized the critical consensus as follows: "towards the end of the Enlightenment, men discovered the inadequacy of reason and turned towards the irrational."[201] Such generalizations do not naturally align with the contours of literary and intellectual history, but they can provoke thinking in sometimes useful ways. Though not neatly separable from one another, two literary streams seem to emanate from the *Urform* of *Der Geisterseher*—one that actually privileges the rational (the magical-mechanical preoccupations of Tschink) and one the irrational (the immersive and unresolved horrors of Grosse). That both forms of imitation should proceed from the same source demonstrates the failure of any description that relies on the dyadic pair of the rational and the irrational as clearly delineated terms. Jürgen Klein has suggested that much of gothic fiction "must hinge on the vacillation between Ratio-Irratio," another descriptive phrase that relies on the fundamental division of two mutually exclusive terms: Ratio and Irratio, fiction and explanation, *Aufklärung* and *Bertrug*. Recognizing *Der Geisterseher* as a source for both rational and irrational fiction[202] draws our attention to the element of Schiller's text from which both arise—suspense. In *Der Geisterseher,* suspense is not only a *hinge*—a pivotal experience separating one path from another—it is also a complex state within which opposing concepts and possibilities converge.

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[201] Hadley, 20.

[202] In addition to being cited as an origin point for horror fiction (irrational fiction), Claus Reinert has also studied *Der Geisterseher* as a source for detective fiction (rational fiction): *Detektivliteratur bei Sophokles, Schiller und Kleist: Das Rätsel der Wahrheit und die Abenteuer des Erkennens* (Kronberg: Scriptor Verlag, 1975).

This reading of Schiller's *Der Geisterseher* can be interestingly compared and contrasted with the works considered elsewhere in this dissertation. In the *Fragmente aus dem Tagebuch eines Geistersehers*, which may or may not have had any actual connection to Schiller's novel,[203] Karl Philipp Moritz also explored the porous boundary between rationality and irrationality. In what Michael Voges has termed Moritz's "occult Enlightenment,"[204] the fluidity of these concepts becomes productive, rather than perilous. Seemingly unconcerned with the conspiracy theories about secret societies that so worried the writers of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*—and subsequently Schiller—Moritz explored *Geistersehen* not as a tool of reasoning and deception, but as a metaphor for the act of reading and producing art. As Scott Abbott observes, Schiller stepped away from art for a period of time, choosing philosophy, instead, to address the problems of freedom and autonomy in life and aesthetics. Goethe seems to share some of Schiller's concerns, particularly about the place of ghosts and the supernatural in artwork. As early as the 1770's, Goethe considered critically the tradition of the *Gespensterballade* and parodied its tendency to eschew all positive cognitive activity in favor of an immersive affective experience.[205] Like Schiller, he too expressed concerns about the consequences of deceptions like Cagliostro's in his play *Der Groß-Cophta*, but like Moritz, Goethe seeks to resolve the

[203] Bridgwater seems to think that Schiller was thinking of Moritz's work when he started work on his *Geisterseher* novel, but since the *Fragmente* were not published until 1787 (though written in 1786), this cannot be right. Far more likely is that Moritz's publisher, noticing the successful of Schiller's novel in *Thalia* in early 1787, augmented the title of Moritz's piece, which he had simply called *Fragmente*, to include "aus dem Tagebuch eines Geistersehers" in the hopes of appealing to an audience hungry for more stories like Schiller's.

[204] Cf. Michael Voges, *Aufklärung und Geheimnis: Untersuchungen zur Vermittlung von Literatur- und Sozialgeschichte am Beispiel der Aneignung des Geheimbundmaterials im Roman des späten 18, Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987).

[205] Schiller also took on the *Gespensterballade* tradition is his critique of Bürger, though not until 1790. Bridgwater suggests that the timing of this critique, coming on the heels of his work on *Der Geisterseher*, may actually be a kind of self-critique (Bridgwater 150).

problems posed by the representation of the supernatural through an ongoing relationship to artistic production. The results, as found in his *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*, bear some similarities to Moritz's *Fragmente* and ultimately abandon the types of questions that *Der Geisterseher* poses about the problematic convergence of deception and Enlightenment. But significantly, neither Moritz nor Goethe produce works half as entertaining as Schiller's novel, at least in part because the only way to solve the problem of supernatural aesthetics is to turn one's back on the perilous but enticing structuring device of suspense.

CHAPTER FIVE:
GOETHE'S SEARCH FOR A COGNITIVELY PRODUCTIVE GHOST STORY

In several works from the 1770's, '80's and '90's, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe explored the widespread popular interest in ghosts as well as the controversy surrounding the infamous charlatan ghost-seer Cagliostro and his peripheral connection to the Diamond Necklace Affair in France. Though scholarship on Goethe has examined particular instances in which he engaged with these popular trends related to ghosts and ghost-seeing, there are fewer analyses of how this theme recurs across multiple works.[206] In part, this results from the fact that two important texts regarding ghosts are the relatively marginal works, *Claudine von Villa Bella* (1776) and *Der Groß-Cophta* (1791), generally read alongside other texts of their respective periods in Goethe's career—*Claudine von Villa Bella* in the context of Sturm und Drang, [207]

[206] One notable exception is Patrick Bridgwater's chapter on Goethe and the Gothic, which addresses many of the crucial works, though his analysis primarily focuses on genre and style. See: Patrick Bridgwater, *The German Gothic Novel in Anglo-German Perspective*, (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2013).

[207] Very few scholarly works focus solely on *Claudine von Villa Bella*, so most of the work done it thus far is only in the context of larger chapters (such as Bridgwater's chapter on Goethe and the Gothic, see note 1) and biographies. See, for example: W. Daniel Wilson, "Young Goethe's Political Fantasies," in *Camden House History of German Literature, VI: Literature of the Sturm Und Drang*, ed. David Hill (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2003), 187–215.

and *Der Groß-Cophta* in the context of Goethe's writings about the French Revolution between roughly 1790 and 1795.[208] The third text, and the one I consider the most important to an examination of Goethe and ghost stories, is the *Unterhaltungen deutscher Augewanderten* (1795). This collection of stories, stitched together by a frame narrative involving German aristocrats who seek refuge together from the impending violence of the French Revolution, has received more scholarly attention than *Claudine von Villa Bella* and *Der Groß-Cophta*, despite being considered a lesser work at the time of its publication.[209] Many of these scholarly efforts, however, focus on the contribution that the text makes to the development of the German novella (particularly in the famous "Märchen" at the conclusion), and fewer scholars have examined the two short ghost stories that appear at the beginning.[210]

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[208] See especially: Patrick Fortmann, "Miniaturizing the Revolution: Political Fantasy, Theatricality, and Sovereignty in Goethe's *Comedies Der Groß-Cophta, Die Aufgeregten*, and *Bürgergeneral*," *Monatshefte* 105, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 1–25; as well as: Lothar Ehrlich, "Goethes Revolutionskomödien," *Goethe-Jahrbuch 107* (1990): 179–99; Fritz Martini, "Goethes 'Verfehlte' Lustspiele: *Die Mitschuldigen* Und *Der Gross-Cophta*," in *Natur Und Idee: Andreas Bruno Wachsmuth Zugeeignet*, ed. Helmut(ed.) Holtzhauer (Weimar: Bohlau, 1966), 164–210.

[209] Charlotte von Stein and Wilhelm von Humboldt both communicated very negative early responses, and Albert Bielschowsky, writing in his biography *Goethe, sein Leben und sein Werke*, says of the stories in *Unterhaltungen* that they are ones "die wir […] gern unter [Goethes] Werken gemißt hätten." Albert Bielschowsky and Walther Linden, *Goethe, Sein Leben Und Sein Werke* (München, C.H. Beck, 1928), 50.

[210] Even Andreas Gailus, whose reading of the *Unterhaltungen* is far more complex and innovative, uses genre transitions within the frame narrative and throughout the stories as the basis for his argument about the text's strategies for thinking about history in the wake of the French Revolution. See: Andreas Gailus, *Passions of the Sign: Revolution and Language in Kant, Goethe, and Kleist*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006). For more on the long tradition of thinking about the *Unterhlantungen* in conjunction with questions of genre, see, for example: Bernd Balzer, "Der Löwenbändiger: Goethes Einfluss Auf Die Deutsche Novelle*," Zagreber Germanistische Beiträge: Jahrbuch Für Literatur- Und Sprachwissenschaft 18* (2009): 245–55; Günter Damann, "Goethes '*Unterhaltungen Deutscher Ausgewanderten'* Als Essay über die Gattung der Prosaerzählung im 18. Jahrhundert," in *Der Deutsche Roman Der Spätaufklärung: Fiktion Und Wirklichkeit*, ed. Harro Zimmermann, (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universität Verlag, 1990), 1–24; Heinrich Henel, Ingeborg C. Henel, and Bettine H. Elliot,

In this chapter, I examine how these three works—*Claudine von Villa Bella, Der Groß-Cophta*, and *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*[211]—critique popular approaches to telling stories about ghosts and ghost-seers and their failures to be cognitively productive. Each work addresses a different aspect of these popular traditions: *Claudine von Villa Bella* engages with the tradition of the *Gespensterballade*, of which Gottfried August Bürger's "Lenore" (1774) is perhaps the most famous example; *Der Groß-Cophta* tells a story about the charlatan ghost-seer Cagliostro and his involvement in the Diamond Necklace Affair in France a few years before the Revolution;[212] and *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* includes several ghost

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"Anfänge der Deutschen Novelle," *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht, deutsche Sprache und Literatur* 77, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 433–48; Gerhard Neumann, "Die Anfänge Deutscher Novellistik: Schillers *Verbrecher Aus Verlorener Ehre—Goethes Unterhaltungen Deutscher Ausgewanderten*," in *Unser Commercium: Goethes Und Schillers Literaturpolitik*, ed. Wilfried Barner, Eberhard Lämmert, and Norbert Oellers, (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1984), 433–60; Joachim Muller, "Zur Entstehung der deutschen Novelle: Die Rahmenhandlung in Goethes *Unterhaltungen Deutscher Ausgewanderten* und die Thematik der Franzosischen Revolution," in *Gestaltungsgeschichte Und Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Literatur-, Kunst- Und Musikwissenschaftliche Studien*. *Fritz Martini Zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Kate; Kreuzer, Helmut Hamburger (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1969), 152–75. Two notable exceptions include Evelyne Jacquelin, who reads the ghost stories as borderline cases between the literary aesthetic categories of the "fantastic" (looking forward to Romanticism) and the "Wunderbare" (looking back at 18th century aesthetics); and Gero von Wilpert, whose reading of the political allegory in the Antonelli story was tremendously helpful in my work on deciphering it. See: Evelyne Jacquelin, "Fantastisches Und Wunderbares: Goethes Behandlung Des 'Geisterhaften' in den *Unterhaltungen Deutscher Ausgewanderten*," in *Fremde Welten: Wege Und Räume Der Fantastik Im 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Lars Schmeink, Hans-Harald Müller, and Astrid Böger, (Berlin, Germany: de Gruyter, 2012), 363–79.; 1. Gero von Wilpert, "Die Politische Sängerin: Spuk Und Aktualität in Goethes 'Sängerin Antonelli,'" *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 1991): 189–202.

[211] All references to the works of Goethe in this chapter refer to the Deutscher Klassiker Verlage edition and will be henceforth cited in parentheses according to the following format (*G* [volume number]:[page #]): Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe und Gespräche: Vierzig Bände*, (Frankfurt am Main, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985-).

[212] The historical Cagliostro was not actually involved in the Diamond Necklace Affair, but his connections with one of the people involved led to his trial and exposure. The fictional version of

stories borrowed from contemporary sources and intended as exemplars of the sort of "supernatural" anecdotes that appeared in periodicals such as the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. Goethe's general critique, however, remains consistent. He recognizes a frightening potency in stories of the supernatural that cannot be sufficiently contained by attempts to inscribe them into narratives privileging cause-and-effect as an explanatory structure. Goethe critiques the way that ghost stories generally prove useless as a means of generating cognitive activity, showing that they generally result in one of two possibilities: either all thinking is swallowed up by the affective atmosphere of the supernatural (as seen in *Claudine von Villa Bella*), or the insistence on cause-and-effect devolves into pure formalism, annihilating meaning altogether (as seen in *Der Groß-Cophta*). Only by moving beyond causality and seeking an alternative mode of aesthetic representation can an author transform a ghost story into a cognitively productive text.[213] This is precisely what Goethe aims to do in the ghost stories that open the *Unterhaltungen*; contrary to a prevalent scholarly view that reads the inclusion of the ghost stories solely as a means of denigrating them as a narrative form, I argue that Goethe achieves a kind of aesthetic breakthrough by placing the supernatural occurrences in those stories in simultaneous connection and disjunction with one another. The stories are linked with one another, in the sense that they have clear thematic connections and recurrent motifs, but these

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Cagliostro who appears in *DGC*, named "Der Graf," plays a much more active role in the version of the Diamond Necklace Affair that plays out there.

[213] Though she focuses on the whole *Unterhaltungen*, and not the ghost stories specifically, Heather Sullivan has similarly noted the tendency on the part of scholars to read the *Unterhaltungen* as having some sort of linearly-progressing structure, and she seeks an alternative in an analysis of its representation of sense perceptions: Heather I. Sullivan, "Ecocriticism, Goethe's Optics and *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*: Emergent Forms versus Newtonian 'Constructions,'" *Monatshefte Für Deutschsprachige Literatur Und Kultur* 101, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 151–69.

connections do not suggest a causal chain or yield material explanations for supernatural phenomena.

The relationship between the two ghost stories in the *Unterhaltungen* departs from a narrative structure that relies on suspense. As shown in the earlier chapters of this dissertation, various texts of the Enlightenment period employed suspense either to demonstrate or to critique the usefulness of ghost stories in activating Enlightened modes of knowledge production. Presenting ostensibly "supernatural" occurrences, these texts then compelled their readers to uncover the underlying causes that would explain the phenomena and demonstrate the material causes of the magical effect. Tzvetan Todorov's work facilitates further consideration of literary suspense; he categorizes literature into three types, distinguished from one another by their relationship to suspense. These categories are the fantastic, the marvelous and the uncanny. For as long as the reader is held in a state of suspense, unsure about the veracity of a supernatural phenomenon within a text, we are in the world of the fantastic. As Todorov describes, the condition of the fantastic within literature is synonymous with being held suspended, as the fantastic challenges the normal conditions of the world as we understand it. A fantastic occurrence can resolve in one of two directions: either it can be shown to conform to what we know about the world, in which case the text ultimately belongs under the heading of the "marvelous;" or it can be shown to deviate from what we know about the world in which case, Todorov says that the text belongs under the heading of the "uncanny."[214]

Discourses of the "marvelous" predate the eighteenth century and were connected with the practice of collecting unusual or rare natural objects. Representing novelty and possibility,

[214] Cf. the introduction to this dissertation, particularly the section on "The Ghost in the Enlightenment"

these objects challenged the beholder towards an expanded understanding of the sensible world; their empirical reality, however, clearly identified these objects as natural—though marvelous, they were not uncanny. Simon During notes that this practice of collecting marvels had waned by the second half of the eighteenth century,[215] but I have argued that the category of the "marvelous" figures significantly within late Enlightenment texts, playing a crucial role in how various philosophers contend with ghosts and the supernatural. Revealing that apparently supernatural phenomena have natural causes transforms those phenomena into edifying marvels that expand human understanding. This process, which strongly privileges a linear relationship between cause and effect, is not without problems; in using the apparently supernatural marvel to incite suspense and trigger investigations of material causality, this incorporation of ghosts into Enlightenment pedagogy possesses a manipulative edge. As Schiller explores in *Der Geisterseher*, both the sensational aspects of the phenomena and the predictability of the *Aufklärung* process it initiates render the beholder susceptible to manipulation by the party responsible for the presentation of such a marvel. Furthermore, the temporary suspension of preconceptions demanded by such stories does not always resolve in a productive way; such ghost stories do not always succeed in producing meaningful cognitive activity. As he develops an alternative model of supernatural aesthetics, Goethe rejects the privileging of cause-and-effect explanations and chooses not to engage his audience through suspense. Eventually, this leads him to reassert the importance of the "marvelous" as a category of aesthetic and literary representation of the supernatural, though his exclusion of suspense from the *Unterhaltungen* firmly differentiates these representations from uncanny or fantastic literature.

[215] Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2002).

Der "Erlkönig" and "Walpurgisnacht": the potency of affect and the impotence of intellect

Though not among the three primary works assessed in this chapter, both "Der Erlkönig" (1782) and the "Walpurgisnacht" scene from *Faust I* (1808) represent potent affective responses to ostensibly supernatural phenomena that override the intellectual explanations provided for them. Personally, Goethe sought to free himself from the tyranny of superstitious fears. In his autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, he recounts spending time outside at night during his childhood in an effort to immunize himself against a fear of ghosts; afraid that ghosts and spirits might dwell in the darkness, he exposed himself to the night to rid himself of those fearful fantasies and differentiate them from his actual perceptions. Goethe recognized the dangerous potency of affective responses to the "supernatural"—whether real or imagined. He did not agree with other Enlightenment thinkers, however, that analysis of cause-and-effect would adequately quell these affective responses. This becomes evident when one considers how the potency of fear is depicted in confrontations with the supernatural throughout his literary works.

His famous poem, "Der Erlkönig," stages the conflict between affective and intellectual responses to the supernatural in dramatic fashion. As Richard Alewyn has observed, at the poem's tragic conclusion, the father's terror does not, as one possible interpretation might suggest, stem from his belief that the Erlkönig is indeed real and has taken his son's life; he is rather terrified at the tremendous potency of the boy's imagination. The boy becomes so thoroughly convinced, in his frenzied state, of the Erlkönig's existence, that he is actually frightened to *death*.[216] The father's only defense against his son's fears is to reason with him, supplying causal explanations for the supernatural phenomena. This occurs three times in the

[216] Cf. Alewyn 318-319

poem. “Siehst, Vater, du den Erlkönig nicht? / Den Erlenkönig mit Kron und Schweif” laments the child; “Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif” replies the father. The father understands that, because of a confused or distressed imagination, his son is seeing menacing apparitions in the surrounding world, and he hopes to calm the boy by offering a material explanation. A similar exchange is repeated twice more: when the boy hears the Erlkönig whisper, the father explains it as, “in dürren Blätter säuselt der Wind,” and when the boy sees Erlkönig’s sisters, the father becomes more desperate, agreeing that he, too, sees something, but that the boy is misinterpreting it: “Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh es genau, / Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau.” For each apparently supernatural phenomenon that the child witnesses the father has a causal explanation—a clarification of the true cause for the apparently supernatural beings of the boy’s hallucinations. These explanations, however, fail to keep the boy from dying, demonstrating the insurmountable potency of an affective response, despite clear intellectual counter-explanations.

In *Faust I*, Goethe again demonstrates the impotence of such intellectual explanations against a powerful affective response. Here, he mocks one of the Enlightenment figures *par excellence*, Friedrich Nicolai. A parody of Nicolai, named the “Proktophantasmist,” appears among the numerous figures in the “Walpürgisnacht” scene. The name, Proktophantasmist, references a famous incident from 1791, when Nicolai suffered from supernatural visions from which he claimed to cure himself by applying leeches to his backside (hence “Prokto” [rump], “Phantasmist” [ghost-seer]). Nicolai was so pleased with this medical explanation for the whole incident that he actually reported it to the Berlin Academy of Science in 1799 and published an

article on it in the *Neue Berlinische Monatsschrift* that same year.[217] In "Walpürgisnacht," the Proktophantasmist turns up as Faust and Mephistopheles are dancing with "die Schöne" and "die Alte." Shocked by the scene of revelry and debauchery that surrounds him, the Prokotophantasmist cries, "Hat man euch lange nie bewiesen: / Ein Geist steht nie auf ordentlichen Füssen?" His choice of words immediately betrays his orientation—it has been (rationally, scientifically) proven [*bewiesen*] that a spirit "steht nie auf ordentlichen Füssen," simultaneously suggesting that it is does not exist and that it is always immoral.

Like the father's explanations in "Der Erlkönig," the Proktophantasmist's negation of spirits lacks potency here, for he is standing in the midst of dancing supernatural figures even as he makes wild claims that they are not real. "Ihr seid noch immer da!" he cries, evidently shocked. Whereas the father in "Der Erlkönig" was horrified by his son's imagination and the distress it caused, the Proktophantasmist expresses dumbfounded amazement and is clearly meant as a figure of ridicule. "Verschwindet doch! Wir haben ja aufgeklärt," he goes on, transmuting "die Aufklärung" into a verb and treating it as a magic word that, once spoken, should banish the spirits before him. Goethe demonstrates little patience and even less regard for this approach in *Faust I*. He references the famous incident of the "Spuk in Tegel,"[218] an incident in which a small group of men went to an estate outside of Berlin to investigate reports of "hauntings" there. The residents of the Tegel estate reported hearing strange sounds in the night; the team of amateur investigators discovered that these sounds were caused by a draft of air and some loose floorboards, thus proving that the "ghosts" haunting the estate were not real. This was written up

[217] "Beispiel einer Erscheinung mehrerer Phantasmen," in *Neuen Berlinischen Monatsschrift* No. 203, May 1799, 321-360.

[218] The "Spuk in Tegel" was a famous incident of haunting near Berlin that was investigated by a kind of amateur society for paranormal research, made up of champions of the Enlightenment, in the early 1790's.

in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* and presented as a victory for the Enlightenment over superstition, but Goethe does not present it that way here. Rather, he seems to suggest that the persistence of these sorts of "hauntings" demonstrates the enduring failure of cause-and-effect explanations to banish the supernatural from the imagination: "Wir sind so klug, *und dennoch* spukt's in Tegel" (my emphasis). Rather than suggesting a victory of intellect over superstition, this statement expresses frustration and confusion at the durability of these phenomena in spite of all efforts to do away with them.

After establishing opposition in this scene between the supernatural (represented by the devil and his minions) and reason (represented by the Proktophantasmist), Goethe chooses to align himself (the poet) with the supernatural. This association is indicated in the Proktophantasmist's parting words: "Heut, seh ich, will mir nichts gelingen; / Doch eine Reise nehm ich immer mit / Und hoffe noch vor meinem letzten Schritt / *Die Teufel und die Dichter* zu bezwingen" (my emphasis). The Proktophantasmist groups poets and devils together, identifying both as his antagonists and as opponents of Nicolai's Enlightenment. This is superficially confusing, as it was written by a man who sought to inure himself to superstition, who wrote in the 1770's of the terrifying and threatening potency of the imagination, and who placed ghost stories at the bottom of the aesthetic hierarchy in the *Unterhaltungen.* Why align the poet with the supernatural then? This apparent contradiction is deceptive; Goethe's objection to Nicolai specifically concerns his approach to invalidating ghosts and the epistemological model it implies. While Goethe, like Nicolai, may disavow the ontological veracity of the ghost, he objects to the way Nicolai and other Enlightenment thinkers used ghosts in their works; this chapter explores Goethe's alternative conception of how ghosts can and should be approached aesthetically. If pure intellectual approaches cannot suppress affective response to ostensibly

supernatural phenomena, then what alternative approach could render a ghost story cognitively productive?

Claudine von Villa Bella and the perilous atmosphere of the *Gespensterballade*

As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, eighteenth-century aesthetic theorists actively debated whether ghosts were suitable as literary subjects in an age characterized by the renunciation of old superstitions. Those who eschewed ghost stories expressed concerns about the potential danger of inspiring fear and confusion in readers. A number of thinkers were concerned about the potential danger of these frightening and confusing stories. Ghosts and ghostly motifs, nevertheless, found a place in German literature in the second half of the eighteenth century. Goethe's early depictions of ghosts invoke and comment on one of the first significant literary genres to introduce such motifs to late Enlightenment German literature: the *Gespensterballade*. These *Gespensterballade* were written in conscious imitation of the folk ballads of oral tradition. The authors of some of the first and most popular ballads, including James MacPherson (Ossian) and Thomas Percy, actually denied writing the poems, claiming instead to have "uncovered" them like artifacts unearthed in an archeological dig. These false histories allowed the authors of the *Gespensterballade* to depict supernatural phenomena in ways that were not permissible within "proper" Enlightenment literature.

Masquerading as the products of a superstitious past during which people believed in all manner of supernatural things, these poems avoided some of the thornier questions of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory; they dispensed with the problematic issue of "believability" by presenting their supernatural content as safely historical—the product of an outmoded worldview, presenting no threat to current Enlightenment assumptions. Precedent already existed

for evading eighteenth-century concerns about ghosts by presenting them not as realities, but as the projections of a misguided consciousness. Building on Bodmer and Breitinger's arguments, Lessing had already argued that a ghost could appear onstage under certain conditions: there had to be a character onstage who believed or accepted that the apparition was real—that way, the audience members would not be asked to question their own assumptions, but could understand that they were witnessing the subjective state of that onstage character. This argument circumnavigates the problem of "believability." For Lessing, the appearance of a ghost on stage did not represent a supernatural reality, it represented the superstitious disposition or subjective state that would allow someone to mistakenly perceive such things.[219] The early *Gespensterballaden* avoided the problem of "believability" in a similar way; they did not present ghosts as evidence of supernatural realities, but as relics of a bygone superstitious era. Before these *Gespensterballaden,* "ghosts" primarily appeared in humorous or ironic contexts within contemporary Enlightenment literature, usually as part of a joke or a deception. A character might dress up as a ghost either as a way of tormenting a rival,[220] or because he wanted to go somewhere he was forbidden to venture (like a lover's room at night).[221] These clearly material, false "ghosts" did not challenge Enlightenment ideology because the reader was always made

[219] Cf. the introduction to this dissertation, particularly the section on "Ghosts and Ghost Stores in the Eighteenth Century."

[220] For example, a short episode in Johann Karl Wezel's *Lebensgeschichte Tobias Knaus des Weisen* (1773-1776) in which the main character is hired to haunt a widow as the ghost of her departed husband.

[221] For example, in Lessing's humorous poem, "Die Gespenster," a father remarks on the strange, supernatural noises her hears coming from his daughter's room every night, when it is clear to the audience that she is actually receiving illicit visits from a lover. At various points in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, people sneaking into their lovers' rooms or houses are described as apparitions and phantoms, and Philine pays her visit to Werther's room also disguised as a ghost.

aware of the ruse and prevented from believing that these "spirits" were real. The *Gespensterballade* introduced something new to German Enlightenment literature, since they allowed for depictions of the supernatural that were not merely tricks. Though they did not attempt to persuade Enlightenment readers to believe in ghosts, they did present ghosts as "truths" of a more superstitious age. An Enlightened reader could therefore read such poems without straying from his values and assumptions.

Though the historical claims of the *Gespensterballade* offered a pretext for the consideration of topics otherwise excluded from eighteenth-century aesthetics, those claims were actually fictional deceptions, making this genre fundamentally at odds with Enlightenment values; the motivations of authors developing this deceptive genre were questionable from an Enlightenment perspective. Neither the authors nor the audiences of the *Gespensterballade* consistently related to these works with the collected, rational attitude that Lessing had proposed regarding ghosts in the theater. Bürger, author of the most famous *Gespensterballade*, "Lenore," was an avid believer in ghosts and the supernatural. For him, there was nothing outdated about a "superstitious" worldview. Furthermore, he was quite intent on cultivating strong affective responses to his work, looking for ways to heighten the eerie and unsettling atmosphere they generated. For the first reading of "Lenore," Bürger stipulated atmospheric decoration and lighting of the room; he even borrowed a skull so that he could place it imposingly on the desk while he read.[222] If the *Gespensterballade* did not challenge readers' intellectual/rational disbelief in ghosts, Bürger nevertheless represents an evident attempt to generate a strong affective response to them—making ghosts "believable" on the level of emotion, if not of

[222] See Benno von Wiese, *Die Deutsche Lyrik I*; (Düsseldorf, A. Bagel: 1957), 196.

intellect. Bürger and others sought to make the audience fear the things that they supposedly did not believe in rationally.

Contemporaries of Bürger and other *Gespensterballade* authors were aware of the affective potency of these poems, and not all of them condoned these depictions of the supernatural. Regardless of the poems' historical pretexts, some critics objected to their representation of ghosts, arguing that even historical literary ghosts had the potential to confuse a readers' Enlightened sensibility. Christoph Martin Wieland, for instance, who frequently wrote stories about fairies, elementals, and other creatures from a supernatural realm, completely opposed the depiction of ghosts; Wieland argued that while readers' understood his fairies and fanciful beings as fictional inventions, ghosts held a more ontologically contested status and risked confusing the reader. Like the Father in *Der Erlkönig* (counted by some as a *Gespensterballade*), Wieland and other critics were fearful of the consequences of this affective confusion. Though the application of reason and embrace of Enlightenment ideology should strip the apparition of its affective power, Wieland's uneasy attitude towards the depiction of ghosts in literature betrays concerns about reason's ability to adequately meet the challenges posed by literary works such as the *Gespensterballaden*.

Apart from "Der Erlkönig," Goethe's primary engagement with the *Gespensterballade* tradition is found in his short dramatic work *Claudine von Villa Bella*; here, he builds a critique of this literary form by crafting an archetypal example of it that demonstrates its faults and limitations. Written just after *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, and still in the midst of the *Sturm und Drang* period, *Claudine* adopts a parodic attitude towards literary "sentimentalism" [*Empfindsamkeit*] in general. One of two "Schauspiel mit Gesang" written in the mid-1770's (the other: *Erwin und Elmira*, 1775), *Claudine* follows the form of the *Opera comique*, imported

from France; it alternates prose dialogue with sections of song. Despite moments of tension and the dramatic milieu of the violent forest robbers, *Claudine* is fundamentally comedic and treats with distanced irony what would have been emotionally overwrought in *Werther*. At times, the main characters make proclamations with the full gusto of *Empfindamkeit*:

> [Claudine:] je näher wir die Natur sind, je näher fühlen wir uns der Gottheit, und unser Herz fliesst unaussprechlich in Freuden über[…] [Pedro:] Ach, diesen Morgen, als ich die Blümchen brach am Bach herauf, der hinter dem herfliesst, und die Morgennebel um mich dufteten, und die Spitze des Bergs drüben mir den Aufgang der verkündigte, und ich ihr entgegenrief: Das ist der Tag!—das ist ihr Tag!—Claudine!—Ich bin ein Tor, dass ich auszusprechen wage, was ich empfinde! (*G* 4:597-598)

Moments later, however, after those characters leave the stage, Goethe gives the floor to other characters who scoff at these sentimental outbursts. After this particular exchange, a character named Camille remarks: "[Camille:] Sie meint, weil sie ein rund Köpfchen hat, ein Stumpfnäschen, und über ein Gräschen und Gänsblümchen gleich weinen kann, so wär was mit ihr" (*G* 4:600). Camille's derision of such sentimental expressions invites the audience to entertain a similarly distanced stance and to laugh at the naïve, if passionate, declarations of these lovers.

The *Gespensterballade* in *Claudine von Villa Bella* receives the same dual treatment—Goethe produces an archetypal example of the genre onstage, but within a context that encourages the audience to judge it with a critical eye rather than becoming immersed in it. Goethe affords the audience this critical distance, in part, by having the characters onstage reference the contemporary literary movement of the *Gespensterballade* by name. They identify it specifically as a newly-revived trend; in the mid-1770's when the play was written and first performed, those ballads were contemporary popular literature. Crugantino—one of the villainous characters in *Claudine von Villa Bella*—is sitting with Claudine and Gonzalo, an older

man. Crugantino has a zither and is singing songs to the other two. Gonzalo is inspired to reminisce about old times, when farmers often sang songs:

> Zu meiner Zeit war's noch anders; da ging's dem Bauer wohl, und da hatt er immer ein Liedchen, das von der Leber wegging und einem's Herz ergötze; und der Herr schämte sich nicht und sang's auch, wenn's ihm gefiel. (*G* 4:613)

According to Gonzalo, they sang all "die alten Lieder, die Liebeslieder, die Mordgeschichten, die Gespenstergeschichten" (*G* 4:614). Gonzalo liked the ghost songs ("Gespensterlieder") in particular, but he thinks that people nowadays mock these sorts of songs. Crugantino contradicts him, indicating to Gonzalo that these sorts of songs are actually back in style: "Der allerneueste Ton ist's wieder, solche Lieder zu singen und zu machen" (*G* 4:614). Through Crugantino, Goethe is referencing the *Gespensterballade* authors like Bürger, who were indeed on the cutting edge of literary style in the mid 1770's when *Claudine von Villa Bella* was performed. There is a humorous irony in Crugantino's equation of the innovative with the antiquated that encourages reflection on the cyclical nature of trends—often hailed as more avant-garde than they actually are. Gonzalo, excited to hear that Crugantino knows some of these songs, requests that he sing one of the *Gespensterballade* right away.

Goethe's portrayal of Crugantino's theatrics allows the audience to adopt a critical distance by lifting the curtain of mystery and revealing how the eerie atmosphere of the Gespensterballade is manufactured. Crugantino sings an untitled song that begins "Es war ein Buhle frech genug," which echoes the contemporary *Gespensterballade* tradition in how it is performed and in its content. Before Crugantino begins, they decide to adjust the setting so as to achieve the proper atmosphere. "Ein Licht aus! Und das andere weit weg!" insists Crugantino; Gonzalo agrees, remarking that this will make it "vertraulicher und schauriger" (*G* 4:614). Like Bürger at the first reading of *Lenore*, Crugantino and Gonzalo are motivated by an excited desire

to cultivate an atmosphere of eeriness and dread. The ballad itself is, like most of the contemporary *Gespensterballaden*, not an old song, but one written by Goethe himself in imitation of an older style. The poem deals with themes of jilted love and revenge, which were common in poems of that genre. It tells the story of a pushy young man ("ein Buhle frech genug") who flirts with and beds a young woman ("Der hat ein armes Maidel jung, / Gar oft in Arm genommen, / Und liebgekost und liebgeherzt, / Als Bräutigam herumgescherzt"), only to eventually abandon her ("und endlich sie verlassen"). The distressed young woman ("Das arme Maidel das erfuhr, / Vergingen ihr die Sinnen") eventually dies of sorrow, and a supernatural occurrence in the moment of her passing exacts revenge upon the young man ("Die Stund, da sie verschieden war, / Wird bang dem Buben, graust sein Haar; / Es treibt ihn fort zu Pferde"). His sudden fear drives him out into a stormy night; a wild horseback ride eventually leads him to a feast attended only by hundreds of corpses.[223] Staged in this way, Goethe allows the audience to perceive the content and performance of Crugantino's *Gespensterballade* as representative of popular conventions.

Though it closely resembles other *Gespensterballaden*, "Es war ein Buhle frech genug" differs from many of the other ghost stories discussed in this dissertation; rather than explicitly questioning the reality of the supernatural occurrences it depicts, it incorporates supernatural elements into its exploration of morality and justice.[224] In this poem, a young woman has been

[223] For the full text of the poem, see *G* 4:614-615.

[224] Ludwig Christoph Heinrich Hölty's *Gespensterballad* "Die Nonne," for example, does something similar—a knight takes sexual advantage of a woman, who then has the opportunity to return from the grave and haunt him until he is driven to suicide; the common thematic of justice for a wronged lover recurs frequently in the *Gespensterballade*. Cf. Ludwig Christoph Heinrich Hölty, "Die Nonne," in *Ludwig Christoph Heinrich Hölty's Sämtliche Werke Vol. 1*, ed. Wilhelm Michael (Weimar: Gesellschaft der Bibliophilien, 1914): 134-137.

wronged and has no social or legal recourse by which to claim compensation for the injustice of the young man's behavior. The supernatural intrusion avenges her when no social or legal structures offer protection. While various versions of the *Weiße Frau* explored in my first chapter emphasize the importance of the ghost's *Ursprung* or *Ursache*, this and other *Gespenterballade* emphasize the ghost's "mission"—rather than investigating the ghost's origin, these poems concern themselves with the ghosts' objectives. In this case, the ghost's objective is vengeance. One branch of the *Gespensterromane* popularized in the 1790's had the same morally-inflected quality. Spiess's *Das Petermännchen* is the best known novel of that type; in it, the hero is haunted by two ghosts who serve as allegories of good and evil, seeking influence over the hero's life.[225] Even among these morally-inflected ghost stories, the *Gespensterballaden* were unique in that they often gave agency to the female, allowing the ghosts of the women themselves to come back and haunt the men who had wronged them.[226] Preoccupied with justice—particularly, within contexts where it might not otherwise exist—the *Gespenterballaden* share thematic concerns with contemporaneous depictions of the *Vehmgerichte* or secret tribunal,[227] introduced to German literature largely through Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773). Like the supernatural occurrence in "Es war ein Buhle frech genug," the *Vehmgericht* in

[225] Michael Hadley has written a careful consideration of what distinguishes German novels of the explained supernatural (such as Schiller's *Geisterseher*) from novels that used ghostly motifs to tell fundamentally moralistic stories (like Spieß's *Petermännchen*). See: Michael L. Hadley, *The Undiscovered Genre: A Search for the German Gothic Nove*l, (Bern: Lang, 1978).

[226] A later version of Hölty's "Die Nonne," for example, deprived the ghost of the woman of some of her agency. Though she still came back to haunt the man who had wronged her, later versions also saw him haunted by an evil, devilish spirit—an allegory for his own tortured conscience, perhaps—and it is this latter spirit, not the ghost of the woman, that prompts him to commit suicide.

[227] Bridgwater identifies novels about the *Vehmgerichte* as an entire subgenre of German "Gothic" fiction, beginning in the 1770s.

Götz delivers justice in a context where no established system exists to uphold it. In *Götz*, the *Vehmgericht* allows a band of low class forest robbers to try a noble woman—something that, otherwise, could not have happened within the play's fourteenth-century setting.

Though Goethe may have been interested in these alternative models of justice, the theme of justice in "Es war ein Buhle frech genug" becomes a source of dramatic irony in *Claudine von Villa Bella*; this dramatic irony eventually reveals Goethe's critique of the *Gespensterballade* and its limitations, as it demonstrates how such poems generate immersive atmosphere but fail to stimulate meaningful cognitive activity. To understand this dramatic irony, one must consider earlier events in the play. Before singing to Claudine and Gonzalo, Crugantino seriously wounded Claudine's lover, Don Pedro. Claudine sits and listens to Crugantino sing, unaware that her lover lies injured in the forest. Twice during the performance, Crugantino is interrupted. The first time, a character named Sebastian enters and remarks, "Ich suche Don Pedro überall, und kann ihn nicht finden" (*G* 4:615). Crugantino mutters to himself, "Ich glaub's wohl" reminding the audience that only he is aware of Don Pedro's condition (*G* 4:615). He resumes the song, and the second interruption comes when Claudine faints after being told that Pedro is dangerously wounded. This concludes the scene, and the audience is left to unpack the irony of these events: though Crugantino has wronged Claudine by injuring her lover, he sings her a song about a young woman's ghost exacting revenge upon the man who wronged her. In other words, this criminal sings to his victim about the punishment of criminals.

Though the audience can see this dramatic irony, it is completely lost on the characters. This is the critique of *Gespensterballaden* that *Claudine von Villa Bella* suggests: the poem contains themes of justice, but it fails to generate meaningful reflection on those themes as it envelopes its onstage audience with a potent atmosphere and mood. One might want to interpret the poem as

indication that Crugantino will ultimately face retribution for his crime, but this does not come to pass. Though, thematically, the poem portrays the punishment of a criminal, its eerie mood becomes further punishment exacted by the criminal, Crugantino, on the victim, Claudine. The poem's tone elicits an affective response, but its content only has significance insofar as it contributes to the tone—not the other way around. "Es war ein Buhle frech genug" does not even have a proper conclusion; in the play, the poem is cut off by Claudine's faint and never resumed. Even when the poem appeared in later collections of Goethe's works, it was left as a fragment. The final line is left metrically incomplete and ends simply with a dash. The ballad, lacking a concluding period (or literal point), also fails to convey a thematic point. Its aesthetic function is to generate and sustain an eerie atmosphere for as long as it takes to recite—and as it lacks a conclusion, one might begin to suspect that it could go on endlessly, if the teller desired to prolong the moody effect. The narrative in the ballad reinforces this sense of an unending process, lacking direction and destination. When the haunted man jumps on his horse, he rides "sieben Tag und sieben Nacht" in a completely haphazard, directionless manner: "...ritt auf alle Seite, / Herüber, 'nüber, hin und her, / Kann keine Ruh erreiten" (*G* 4:616). The number seven lends the song a kind of magical quality befitting something of this genre, as seven is a number frequently associated with magical significance; most notably, it evokes the Biblical creation myth, in which the world was created in seven days. The fact that the haunted man takes "keine Ruh" during these seven days establishes contrast between his journey and the process of creation; God took a rest on the seventh day, but the haunted, crazed man took none. If his journey recreates the world, he transfigures it with haunted madness. One foresees no end to the restless ramblings of this *Buhle*, which Goethe reinforces through frequent use of the conjunction "Und" to begin multiple lines, sometimes right after one another: "Und duckt sich vor dem

Regen; / Und wie er tappt und wie er fühlt" (*G* 6:616). Before ascertaining that Claudine faints because she learns of Don Pedro's injury, we might assume that the poem itself had battered her senses to the point of unconsciousness. There is no way to conclude the poem's narrative except to have it end in total loss of consciousness—the relentless world it creates must be shut out, as it cannot be otherwise concluded. The irony turns sinister, though, as the song about a woman's revenge against a man becomes a way of punishing another woman.

In *Claudine von Villa Bella*, Goethe stages the *Gespensterballade* in a way that reveals the artificial theatrics behind its eerie effect; the dramatic irony of the song, in context, also exposes the faults of a genre that privileges its affective impact above all else. Immersed in the poem's mood and affect, the characters onstage ignore the poem's content, hearing the song without reflecting on it or giving it careful consideration; it is as though the hypnotic nature of the song hinders or even inhibits meaningful cognitive activity. The genre's privileging of affect over content is illustrated in Goethe's choice to leave "Es war ein Buhle frech genug" unfinished; its conclusion becomes essentially superfluous after it has accomplished its affective (and primary) purpose. The depiction of the *Gespensterballade* in *Claudine von Villa Bella* indicates a critical attitude on Goethe's part toward works of art based so completely in mood and atmosphere that they fail to offer anything edifying to their audiences. Though in a slightly different way, this critique reemerges in the ghost stories that begin the *Unterhaltungen*. In *Der Gross-Cophta,* a play written roughly fifteen years later and inspired by the charlatan Cagliostro and the Diamond Necklace Affair, Goethe explores a different way in which stories about ghosts can become problematic. In that play, as in Schiller's *Geisterseher*, characters orchestrate the presentation of ostensibly-supernatural phenomena to manipulate others. While these ruses remain affectively potent for characters within the play, Goethe prevents the audience from

experiencing them with suspense; this aesthetic choice refrains from manipulating the audience's emotions, but ultimately risks their total disengagement—which may also obstruct meaningful cognitive activity.

Der Gross-Cophta: staring at the abyss of nihilism

Though the first version of *Claudine von Villa Bella* was written in 1776, Goethe reworked it during his trip to Italy, turning the prose into blank verse and arranging it for operatic setting in the Italian style. Reichardt completed the setting in 1789, while Goethe finished *Torquato Tasso* and returned to work on another opera, then called *Die Mystifizierten*, which Reichardt was also slated to set. Goethe had begun work on *Die Mystifizierten* in 1787, after hearing of the infamous Diamond Necklace Affair in Paris. Originally written in Italian and intended as an opera, *Die Mystifizierten* eventually became *Der Groß-Cophta*, a "comedy" written in prose for the company of the Weimar Theater, which Goethe directed. Though *Der Groß-Cophta* was far from successful on the stage[228] and has generally been viewed as one of Goethe's lesser works, Goethe felt—at least around the time he wrote it—that it was an important piece, one that he wanted to stage "wenigstens alle Jahre einmal als ein Wahrzeichen."[229] Just as Schiller envisioned his *Geisterseher* as an important reflection on the history of human deception and folly, Goethe felt that his play might warn its audience about the potential dangers of charlatans and forgers.

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[228] Reports on the first performances of the play indicate that on the second night of its run, the audience actually demanded a different play: "Eine halbe Stunde vor der gewöhnlichen Zeit, wo angefangen wird, rief das Publikum einstimmig: ein andres Stück!" Report from May 12, 1792 in *Annalen des Theaters* Vol. 10 (Berlin, 1791).

[229] Cf. Goethe's letter to Reichardt dated 07/29/1792 (*G* 6:945).

Though both Schiller and Goethe took inspiration from Cagliostro, Goethe had a distinctly different reference point for this infamous figure and probably wasn't directly influenced by Schiller's novel in the writing of his play. Schiller's sources—primarily the articles published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, most notably Elisa van der Recke's exposé—have been documented in the previous chapter. Goethe became aware of Cagliostro somewhat earlier; though the charlatan did not actually play an active role in the Diamond Necklace Affair, his association with some of its major players brought him into the international spotlight. While working on *Die Mystifizierten* in the first half of 1787, Goethe was following reports on the proceedings of Cagliostro's trial in Paris; upon learning that Cagliostro's family could be traced back to the town of Palermo, Goethe (who was in Italy at the time) actually paid that family a visit.[230] Moved by the family's extreme poverty, and pitying the way that Cagliostro's exploits hurt his family's reputation, Goethe reportedly sent the (admittedly meager) profits from the ticket sales of his production of *Der Gross-Cophta* in Weimar to that family years later.[231]

For as little as Goethe thought of Cagliostro, he found the Diamond Necklace Affair even more repugnant, describing it in terms both mythic and Gothic: the "Halsbandgeschichte [erschreckte mich] wie das Haupt der Gorgone"[232]; and:

> schon im Jahr 1785 hatte die Halsbandgeschichte einen unaussprechlichen Eindruck auf mich gemacht. In dem unsittlichen Stadt-, Hof- und Staatsabgrunde, der sich hier eröffnete, erschienen mir die greulichsten Folgen gespensterhaft, deren Erscheinung ich geraume Zeit nicht los werden konnte...[233]

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[230] Cf. entries in the *Italienische Reise* dated April 13/14, 1787.

[231] Cf. Karl August Böttiger, *Literarische Zustände und Zeitgenossen:Begegnungen und Gespräche im klassischen Weimar* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1998): 46.

[232] Cf. the *Kampagne in Frankreich* entry in Münster, dated November 1792.

[233] Cf. the *Tag- und Jahresheft* 1789.

The scandal may be briefly summarized as follows: two Parisian jewelers make an incredibly expensive necklace, intending to sell it to Queen Marie Antoinette, but the necklace is so expensive that she refuses to buy it. Meanwhile, a woman falsely identifying herself as Marquise Jeanne de La Motte presents herself to Cardinal Louis Rene Eduard de Rohan, a former prince; she claims to be close to the Queen. Rohan has fallen out of favor with Marie Antoinette, but the "Marquise" promises that his performance of a small duty will win her favor back—he must acquire the famous necklace on the Queen's behalf. The Marquise even arranges a meeting between the "Queen," portrayed by an actress, and Rohan, in order to convince him that this request is legitimate. He makes an arrangement with the jewelers, who assume that payment is guaranteed, since Rohan claims to be acting as the Queen's agent. The Marquise takes the necklace, acting as the middleman between Rohan and the Queen, and then proceeds to break apart the necklace and sell off the jewels in England.

Even though the French court was guilty of no actual wrong-doing, the high profile of the scandal drew much attention to its excesses, thus precipitating—at least in Goethe's and others' eyes—the coming of the French Revolution. Cagliostro also had no part in the Affair itself, but his close association with Cardinal Rohan brought him under scrutiny, and the resulting trial exposed his forgeries. In Goethe's revision of the story in *Der Groß-Cophta*, many of the details of the deception remain the same, but his version of the Cagliostro figure—here named "Der Graf"—plays a far more central role. His deceptions and the Marquise's complement one another; the Domherr's (standing in for Cardinal Rohan) susceptibility to the deceptions of one only increases his entanglements with the other. Similar once again to Schiller's *Geisterseher*, *Der Groß-Cophta* suggests that the machinations of political manipulation are essentially the same as those of "supernatural" deception; the "Mystifizierten" of the original title are indeed

multiple: in similar ways, both the Marquise and the Graf rely on their ability to cloak themselves and manipulate the veils that they use to conceal the truth.

The connection between the ostensibly occult and political conspiracy was not an uncommon idea at the time, as evidenced most clearly by the prevalence of conspiracy theories about secret societies fomenting revolution in Europe. In the 1780's the Illuminati had been banned in Bavaria, and other documents published at the time suggested further connections between various societies and revolutionary activity. Goethe himself was a member of a lodge in the early 1780's[234]; while still active in that lodge, he wrote a letter to Lavater, responding to the latter's reports about Cagliostro—Lavater was impressed by Cagliostro's ostensible occultism and the promise of gaining similar knowledge through secret societies:

> Ich habe Spuren, um nicht zu sagen Nachrichten, von einer großen Masse Lügen, die im Finstern schleicht, von der du noch keine Ahndung zu haben scheinst. Glaube mir, unsere moralische und politische Welt ist mit unterir[d]ischen Gängen, Kellern und Cloaken minieret, wie eine große Stadt zu sein pflegt, an deren Zusammenhang, und ihrer Bewohnenden Verhältnisse wohl niemand denkt und sinnt...[235]

Several scholars have already given consideration to the reasons for Goethe's involvement in these societies and the significance that might have,[236] though few of their observations pertain to Goethe's interest in ghost stories specifically. Despite his temporary membership in a lodge, Goethe implies a critique of secret societies even at the time of his letter to Lavater; he insinuates

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[234] For more on the late eighteenth conspiracy theories about the Illuminati and other secret societies, as well as information pertaining to Goethe's involvement in the Freemason, cf. W. Daniel Wilson, *Geheimräte Gegen Geheimbünde: ein unbekanntes Kapitel der Klassisch-romanitschen Geschichte Weimars* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1991) and *Unterirdische Gänge: Goethe, Freimauerei und Politik* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999).

[235] Cf. Goethes letter to Lavater dated 6/22/1781 (*G* 6:974).

[236] Cf. Wilson (1991 & 1999); Scott Abbott, *Fictions of Freemasonry: Freemasonry & the German Novel* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1991); Edward Batley, "Mysteries and Mastery: English Freemasonry in Lessing and Goethe," in *Publications of the English Goethe Society Vol 68* (1999): 1-19.

the subterranean socio-political machinations of these societies, portraying them as worthy of fear or even paranoia. In characterizing secret societies, Goethe paints a picture of a political underworld straight out of a Gothic tale, full of "Gängen, Kellern und Cloaken"—dark places in which "einer großen Masse Lügen […] schleicht." Though these Gothic terms draw from a genre rife with fearsome supernatural forces, Goethe assigns them to a socio-political organism rather than a supernatural one; indeed, in describing secret societies rather than supernatural forces in fearful terms, Goethe seeks to redirect Lavater's awe and argue against his naïve reverence for Cagliostro. Goethe bends the tropes of occultism in an attempt to turn the language of the supernatural against "occult" societies themselves. Still inciting fear in the incomparable powers of an "invisible" force, Goethe contorts Gothic rhetoric to argue that secret societies, and not the ostensible supernaturalism of Cagliostro, should be the subject of Lavater's fear.

Sometime between 1780 and 1790, when he returned to revise and complete *Der Groß-Cophta*, Goethe seems to have shifted his approach to critiquing the charlatanism of someone like Cagliostro, as well as the manipulations of someone like the supposed "Marquise" of the Diamond Necklace Affair—rather than representing these imposters in a way that inspires fear he incorporates them into a humorless comedy meant to inspire the audience's intellectual critique, even as it intentionally fails to provide an engrossing emotional experience. It is fair to say that there is more drama and tension in the two sentences that he penned to Lavater than in all five acts of *Der Groß-Cophta* put together; though the play holds intellectual interest for the scholar, no one should be surprised at the fact that it was unanimously hated by theater-goers in Weimar.[237] It was perhaps this universally negative initial reception, combined with the apparent simplicity of the work as a whole, that led many scholars to all but overlook *Der Groß-Cophta*

[237] See footnote 227.

when considering Goethe's oeuvre. A small group of scholars has more recently sought to reassess the interest that the play might hold,[238] many of them choosing to look at how it reveals Goethe's attitude towards the French Revolution.[239] Though all of these scholars recognize and acknowledge, to varying degrees, the aesthetic weaknesses of the play, none have sufficiently addressed the way that these weaknesses can, curiously, be read as an aesthetic program to which the text aspires. If *Der Groß-Cophta* fails as a dramatic work, it does so out of a conscious attempt to redefine an aesthetic of the (ostensibly) supernatural. Specifically, it seeks to depart from the register of fear—the same tone that Goethe was still writing in when he wrote to Lavater in 1781—and trade it for a kind of detached comedy. The only opportunity to be horrified that the play affords the audience is in response to the human foolishness and the nihilism into which the machinations of both the Graf and Marquise devolve.

Goethe prevents an atmosphere of fear from developing in *Der Groß-Cophta* primarily through the elimination of suspense. This is evident in the first scene, which contains several typical devices that recur throughout the text and dispel suspense before it has a chance to take hold. The play begins with a touch of dramatic flair—according to the stage directions, a musical overture plays as the scene is set;[240] this piece of music is one of the only remaining aspects of the text's original operatic iteration.[241] Music is indicated once more in the third act, during the séance scene, which is the only other opportunity for any sort of real drama. These two instances

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[238] See footnote 207.

[239] See especially Patrick Fortmann, "Miniaturizing the Revolution."

[240] "[…] Die Ouvertüre, welche bis dahin fortgedauert, hört auf und der Dialog beginnt" (*G* 6:23).

[241] In some of his reflections on the failure of *Die Mystifizierten* as an opera, Reichardt remarks on his disappointment and indicates that the music he ultimately composed for use in the play was not an adequate substitute (cf. *G* 6:942).

of music seem to suggest that Goethe may once have imagined the piece unfolding with more of the theatrical flair of the opera or of a showman like Cagliostro. Save for these two vestiges of the original opera, the final prose version of the play has an aggressively non-dramatic quality.[242] This quality is established as soon as the overture concludes; the Domherr is pacing the floor, anxious about a possible encounter with the powerful "Graf." If we are temporarily drawn into the tension of his mood, seeking perhaps to identify with him and feel the thrill of his anxiety, this potential connection is immediately broken by the Marquise's aside: "O Graf! du bist ein unnachahmlicher Schelm! Der meisterhafteste Betrieger!" (*G* 6:24). Before we ever see him, and indeed only moments after we have even heard of him, we are already told that the Graf is a charlatan, and it becomes impossible to identify with the Domherr's fear.

This places the audience in a strange position; it distances us entirely from the Domherr, and we are left with no experience of suspense. Having already been offered an assessment of the Graf as charlatan, we can no longer enter into the thrill of fearing his approach, even temporarily. His subsequent entrance is strangely farcical, rather than eerie. The Graf storms through the doors speaking to two spirits who are ostensibly following behind his left and right shoulders: "[Graf]: Uriel, du zu meiner Rechten, Ithruriel, du zu meiner Linken, tretet herein. Bestrafet die Verbrecher, denen ich dieß Mahl nicht vergeben werde" (*G* 6:27). There is no indication in the stage directions that any special effects are to accompany this entrance. No smoke, no magic lanterns, no music—what we see is simply a man storming on stage and shouting at the air. When the spirits supposedly respond, the scene is punctuated by a moment of

[242] Initially, Goethe has planned to give the piece "eine heitere Seite," in order to cheer himself up: "mir […] einigen Trost und Unterhaltung zu verschaffen." This was what inspired him to choose opera as the form, at first. Eventually, he found that "da waltete kein froher Geist über dem Ganzen, es geriet in Stocken, und um nicht alle Mühe zu verlieren, schrieb ich ein prosaisches Stück" (cf. *Campagne in Frankreich* entry written in Münster, November 1792).

silence during which the Graf supposedly listens: "[Graf]: Uriel! *Pause, als wenn er Antwort vernähme*" (*G* 6:28).

Ruling out suspense as a governing structure for the scene, we are left to consider whether the audience is encouraged to connect with it by some other means. If we are not meant to be afraid of the Graf, perhaps we are meant to be drawn in by dramatic irony—by the pleasure of knowing more than the characters on stage and thus finding the situation humorous. This would initially seem like a plausible reading: if the Graf is a charlatan, then we know more than the Domherr and the others with him, and can experience some enjoyment at the fact that they have fallen for the trick. But we are prevented from enjoying such dramatic irony because the objective "truth" of the scene is only partially revealed to us. The Marquise's asides are rife with uncertainty: after playing along with the Graf's games, she remarks in another aside "Der verwünschte Kerl! Er ist ein Phantast, ein Lügner, ein Betrieger; ich weiß es, ich bin's überzeugt; und doch imponirt er mir!" (*G* 6:30). She is certain that the Graf is fake, but is still impressed, and maybe just a little uncertain; furthermore, she does not seem to know why he engages in these deceptions. If he is a charlatan, we do not hear from him about it, nor are we ever allowed to understand what his plan might be. Discouraged from experiencing the thrill of fear at the Graf's "power," we are also denied comprehensive insight into the plot.

The aesthetic strategy of *Der Groß-Cophta* is characterized by a refusal to connect with the audience by conventional means, thereby reducing the potential for any sort of cognitive response. The spell of suspense is broken, the potential for dramatic irony is left unfulfilled, and the result is curiously paradoxical: though seemingly aware of far more than many of the characters onstage, we experience only confusion and obfuscation. Without an underlying structure of suspense—so crucial to the Enlightenment thinkers who appropriated ghost stories as

a cognitively productive form—we are not driven towards a moment of culminating discovery. The "supernatural" has already been exposed as fraudulent before it appears onstage and this fiction never becomes more than a verbal reference; there is no representation, illusory or otherwise, of the spirits—the Graf simply talks to the air as though they are there. Characters reference invisible ghosts twice more in the play: after the Graf goes suddenly silent, prompting everyone onstage to believe that he has died or gone into a trance, he "comes to" and reports that his spirit had been called elsewhere; [243] during the séance, the Marquise's niece reports seeing spirits in a crystal ball, though the audience is aware that she has been coached in advance about what to claim she sees. [244] By leaving the potential for dramatic irony unfulfilled, the play further thwarts cognitive activity—beyond ascertaining that the "supernatural" events are invalid, we learn little else and never understand the purpose of the illusion. When other comedies reveal their "ghosts" to be lovers sneaking into forbidden chambers during the night,[245] the audience can laugh in recognition of the "supernatural" guise; *Der Groß-Cophta,* however, offers no satisfying revelatory explanation for its characters' deceptions.

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[243] See Act II, scene 5. In the middle of a conversation, the Graf suddenly goes silent: "*Der Graf sitzt indeß unbeweglich und sieht starr vor sich hin*" (*G* 6:49). The Nichte and the Marquise examine him and report that he is "steif wie Holz, als wenn kein Leben in ihm wäre!" (*G* 6:49). A few moments later, he comes to, shouting as though at the driver of a carriage: "*sehr laut und heftig, indem er vom Stuhle auffährt* Hier! halt ein, Schwager! hier will ich aussteigen!" and he proceeds to explain his sudden "absence" with a bunch of supernatural nonsense: "Ein Freund, der gegenwärtig in Amerika lebt, kam unversehens in große Gefahr; er sprach die Formel aus, die ich ihm anvertraut habe; nun konnte ich nicht widerstehen! Die Seele ward mir aus dem Leibe gezogen, und ich eilte in jene Gegenden. Mit wenig Worten entdeckte er mir sein Anliegen, ich gab ihm schleunigen Rath; nun ist mein Geist wieder hier, verbunden mit der irdischen Hülle, die inzwischen als ein lebloser Klotz zurückblieb" (*G* 6:49-50).

[244] See Act III, scene 9.

[245] e.g. Lessing's "Die Gespenster"

Even though we witness characters manipulating each other onstage, *Der Groß-Cophta* doesn't generate meaning through manipulation of the audience's emotions; instead, its aesthetic choices risk the audience's disengagement and may even fail to generate meaning altogether. In Schiller's *Der Geisterseher*, the allure of a certain kind of (narrative) plot—the quest for knowledge driven by the suspense of unknowing—makes the Prince susceptible to the machinations of a different sort of (political) plot. In *Der Große-Cophta*, Goethe's approach to plot endangers meaning altogether—the threat is nihilism, not just manipulation. This is exemplified in the way that the Marquise's plot overlaps with the Graf's. Each potential element of suspense that arises is resolved before it ever gets a chance to escalate; emotional drama is here reduced to a formal demonstration of the characters' manipulative techniques and machinations. Through subtle intimations, the Marquise discovers that the Graf knows she has deceived the Domherr; through a bit of contorted logic, she also apprehends that she can help the Graf, himself, deceive the Domherr by persuading her niece to perform a role in the upcoming séance.[246] In order for the niece to participate in the séance, however, she must be an innocent, unspoiled woman, "die schönste, reinste Taube" (*G* 6:51). This fact throws the niece into great distress, because she has just spent the previous night sleeping with the Marquise's husband: "Ich kann die Geister nicht sehen! ich werde des Todes seyn!" she cries in response, though not

[246] The Marquise states her understanding most clearly at the beginning of Act II, scene 6: "Ich verstehe diese Winke; ich danke dir, Graf, daß du mich für deines Gleichen hältst. Dein Schade soll es nicht seyn, daß du mir nutzest. – Er merkt schon lange, daß ich dem Domherrn mit der Hoffnung schmeichle, die Prinzessinn für ihn zu gewinnen. Von meinem großen Plan ahnet er nichts; er glaubt, es sey auf kleine Prellereyen angelegt. Nun denkt er mir zu nutzen, indem er mich braucht; er gibt mir in die Hand, dem Domherrn durch meine Nichte vorzuspiegeln, was ich will, und ich kann es nicht thun, ohne den Glauben des Domherrn an die Geister zu stärken. Wohl, Graf! so müssen Kluge sich verstehen, um thörichte, leichtgläubige Menschen sich zu unterwerfen."

yet betraying the cause of her anxiety (*G* 6:51). Since the niece fears that the Graf's powers are real, she is terrified that her inability to perform during the séance will reveal her infidelity. As it turns out, her fears are ungrounded; when she tells her aunt the truth, the Marquise simply takes it in stride, thereby dissolving the scene's emotional tension. Indeed, after a moment of shock, the Marquise resolves to use the knowledge of this illicit relationship as another part of her plan:

> Verführt – durch meinen Gemahl! – Beydes überrascht mich, beydes kommt mir ungelegen. – – Fasse dich! – Weg mit allen kleinen beschränkten Gesinnungen! Hier ist die Frage, ob du nicht auch diesen Umstand benutzen kannst? – – Gewiß – – O! sie wird nur desto geschmeidiger seyn, mir blindlings gehorchen – – und über meinen Mann gibt mir diese Entdeckung auch neue Vortheile. (*G* 6:54-55)

While other Enlightenment writers used ostensibly supernatural phenomena to throw readers into a state of suspense and stimulate intellectual analysis of the causes behind these magical effects, Goethe reveals the mechanics of his characters' deceptions before we see the deceptive acts performed. This aesthetic choice prevents his audience from experiencing even temporary mystification. Rather than show us the results of the Marquise's and the Graf's plan first, leaving us in brief suspense about the methods by which they are achieved and generating a drive towards the revelation of that secret, he instead shows us the incremental, step-by-step, improvisatory way that both Graf and Marquise construct their illusions. Their methodologies consistently dismiss the importance of emotional or objective "truth," favoring instead the formal cultivation of reality through social performance. When the Marquise learns of her niece's infidelity, she does two things with this knowledge. First, she coaches her niece to act as the innocent regardless, letting her in on the fact that the Graf is a fraud and telling her how to respond during the séance. Knowing that her niece is not, in fact, "innocent"—according, that is, to the meaning of the word—the Marquise nonetheless tells her to act as the "innocent," thus

fulfilling a formal role within the structure of the Graf's deception. Secondly, she converts the knowledge of this emotional betrayal into tactical leverage that she will use to gain power over her husband, the Marquis. The emotional meaning of her niece's innocence or her husband's lack of faithfulness is negated in its conversion into a purely formal tool of power and manipulation.

The Graf has a similarly dismissive attitude towards meaning, valuing it only insofar as it assists him in maintaining his control over both the Domherr and the Ritter. This is most evident in his approach to their ongoing initiation into the mysteries of his secret society. At the start of the play, the Domherr has been initiated into the second level of the society, while the Ritter has only been initiated into the first. Near the play's midpoint, the Graf promises the imminent arrival of the Groß-Cophta, a mystical and powerful figure around whom the society is organized. Meeting the Groß-Cophta will allow both Domherr and Ritter to advance to the third stage of initiation, though the Ritter must first progress to the second stage. Each stage of initiation is associated with a gnomic phrase, the knowledge of which is apparently all that is required for advancement. The rule of the first stage of initiation is no more than a variant of the Golden Rule: "Was du willst, daß die Menschen für dich thun sollen, das thue für sie" (*G* 6:63). The rule of the second stage, which the Ritter learns in Act III, is essentially just the negation of the first: "Was du willst, daß die Menschen für dich thun sollen, das thue für sie *nicht*" (*G* 6:63).

For the audience, this "initiation" scene can be rather humorous; the phrases themselves are so trite, and the revelation that the second rule negates the first is so preposterous, that one quickly recognizes the absurdity and meaningless of the whole proceeding. In an interesting twist, the revelation of this second rule also disturbs the Ritter, who quickly becomes angry at the contradiction between these two rules: "Entlaßt mich! Es ist mir unmöglich, es ist mir unerträglich solche Reden zu hören!" (*G* 6:63). Seeking to live a life guided by a set of

principles,[247] he rebels against the meaninglessness that he sees in these secret truths and demands to be let out of the society. The Graf, sensing that he is losing control of the Ritter, rapidly fights to regain it, pulling him aside for a private conversation.[248] In this private aside, the Graf reveals to the agitated Ritter that, in fact, the second rule is merely a test[249]—the true initiate must hear it and learn to recognize it as false in order to advance to the third stage of initiation:

> Du hast das sonderbarste Abenteuer überstanden, du hast dir die Würde eines Meisters selbst gegeben, du hast dir die Vorzüge des dritten Grades wie mit stürmender Faust erobert (*G* 6:67)

he declares, much to the Ritter's amazement. The Graf goes on to explain that the Domherr has not yet advanced beyond this second stage of initiation because he has not learned to recognize the falseness of its guiding principle: "Ich arbeite daran. Es ist aber schwerer als du denkst. Der Eigendünkel eines halbklugen Egoisten hebt ihn über alle Menschen hinweg" (*G* 6:69). Despite his initial confusion, the Graf succeeds in winning the Ritter back to his side with this explanation, and the scene concludes with the Ritter declaring, "Ich bin ganz, ich bin ewig dein!" (*G* 6:69).

Having won the Ritter back under his control, the Graf then delivers an aside to the audience in which he admits that this whole process was improvised. "So wäre denn auch dieser nach seiner Art zur Ordnung gewiesen. Man muß die Angeln, die Netze nach Proportion der

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[247] We can clearly see the Ritter's idealism in his long exposition of all that he has come to understand about the First Rule, which comes immediately before he is told the Second Rule (see Act III, scene 5). The Domherr's unpleasantly smug, knowing response to the Ritter's genuine speech—"[diese Äußerngen kommen] von einem Schüler, und von keinem Gefährten" ("Schüler" is the name for initiates of the first level, "Gefährter" the name for initiates of the second)—tells us all we need to know about how to feel about this secret society.

[248] Cf. Act III, scene 6, which takes place out of the Domherr's hearing.

[249] The Graf reminds the Ritter that it was referred to as "Die Prüfung."

Fische einrichten," he explains (*G* 6:69). We come to understand that there is no set plan for what each rule of the initiation process will be; the advancement of the initiates is intended purely as a means of bringing them more fully under the Graf's power—their "advancement" in knowledge is just a formal means by which the Graf gains more complete control over them. The tremendous irony of this sequence of events is that, on a macro level, the second rule of the Graf's secret society is the only true and accurate statement of the play's theme: that everyone only ever acts in his own best interest. The statement that the Ritter refuses to believe is the truest thing anyone says to him. But the meaning of that statement is quickly negated and subsumed under the nihilistic formalism of the Graf's deception. Just as the niece's guilt becomes inconsequential as she assumes the formal role of the "innocent," so too does the momentary truthfulness of the second rule vanish as it is wielded by the Graf as a manipulative tool.

The Graf's and the Marquise's plots both end in further nihilistic negation. When the Groß-Cophta finally appears, he is simply the Graf, wearing a new costume and presenting himself as an all-powerful being. Just as he spontaneously altered the "truths" of his secret society to suit his manipulative needs, he readily annihilates his own identity when the moment presents itself for him to exercise a greater degree of control over his subjects. The plans of the Marquise, who has similarly pretended to be something she is not, end in literal dismantling: having gained possession of the necklace, the first thing she does is break it apart, rending the unity of the whole in the interest of selling the pieces. My analysis of other texts demonstrates the ways that "Geist" has been appropriated as a flexible signifier during the eighteenth century, easily adapted to a variety of conceptual and aesthetic projects—either as a means of producing a certain kind of knowledge or as a way of manipulatively coaxing someone down a certain path.

Here, Goethe explores the risk of allowing signifiers to become altogether meaningless as they are constantly adapted to characters' deceptive machinations; he represents this ongoing and unstoppable process as one that negates meaning and ends in nihilism.

Under such conditions, we are forced to examine whether any sort of positive knowledge production is even possible; can a story of the supposedly supernatural produce any sort of meaningful cognitive activity? *Der Groß-Cophta* is a cold and humorless piece resulting from a deeply affective response to the senselessness of the French Revolution. Whatever glimpse of a thesis it offers is negated by the ceaseless machinations of the Marquise and the Graf who are only intent upon the establishment of purely formal control at the expense of unity and meaning. Despite Goethe's intentions to have it performed every year as a kind of warning, it is hardly surprising that this never came to be; it warns but fails to adequately engage the audience's emotion or intellect. The only meaning that one seems to derive from it regards the potency of and potential for meaninglessness. Though by no means pleasant or entertaining, this piece has a nihilistic darkness that is worthy of consideration, particularly as it contrasts with the aesthetic choices Goethe makes later in *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten.*

The Supernatural Aesthetics of the *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*

Goethe's *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* was originally published in 1795, the same year that his *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* began appearing serially; unlike *Wilhelm Meister*, which refrains from comment on world politics, the *Unterhaltungen* responds directly to the momentous political developments of the French Revolution. Like Bocaccio's *Decameron*, which almost certainly inspired it, the *Unterhaltungen* is a collection of short stories recounted by characters in a frame narrative. The characters in both frame narratives tell stories as they

collectively await the passing of a threat; Bocaccio's characters seek shelter from the plague in a nearby city, while Goethe's German aristocrats take refuge in a country estate near the Rhein (on the border of France and Germany), attempting to escape violent conflicts stemming from the Revolution. Though Goethe's refugees enjoy comfortable accommodations, their conversation is periodically interrupted by sounds of distant cannon fire and gunshots, which reassert the threats of the Revolution. These aural disturbances indicate the continued presence of the Revolution and its threats, even if these aristocrats have mostly found a way to take shelter from it. These sounds of nearby conflict create tension for Goethe's characters that erupts into confrontation early in the frame narrative; it incites political debate between two characters, resulting in a heated argument that causes one of them to leave the estate. The characters begin to tell stories to avoid further political disagreements—the stories serve as distraction and also allow the characters to address political issues indirectly. The two ghost stories that appear as part of the *Unterhaltungen* must be understood within this context; these two stories, known as "Die Sängerin Antonelli" and "Eine Geistergeschichte" (or the story of the "Klopgeist," the Knocking Ghost), are the first two told by the gathered aristocrats.

By analyzing Goethe's ironic parody of the *Gespensterballade* in *Claudine von Villa Bella* and his horror at the nihilistic potential of magical delusion in *Der Gross-Cophta*, we have already begun to see Goethe's concerns about ghost stories and their inability to generate cognitive activity. His low esteem of ghost stories may justify their placement at the beginning of the *Unterhaltungen*. A number of scholars have argued that this text establishes an aesthetic hierarchy, progressing from the lowest to the highest forms of literary achievement as it moves through the sequence of stories told within the frame narrative. Their position at the beginning of the text places ghost stories at the bottom of the aesthetic ladder; the concluding "Märchen" is

the crowning aesthetic accomplishment of the work, according to this reading. I argue that the further devaluation of ghost stories implied by this reading does not adequately address their role in the *Unterhaltungen.* The ghost stories are linked to the frame narrative and to one another by an intricate set of connections; though they appear simple and also very similar to other stories about ghosts in the late Enlightenment, the complex way in which they are interwoven elevates them aesthetically and demonstrates how they can inspire the same kind of cognitive activity that is stimulated by "higher" forms of literature and art. Goethe reveals that ghost stories themselves are not the problem; the problem lies in how they have been constantly linked to reductive explanations of cause-and-effect or to the literary device of suspense. By eschewing both suspense and causal explanation and integrating these ghost stories into a broader aesthetic project, Goethe finds a way to transcend the problems he critiqued in both *Claudine von Villa Bella* and *Der Gross-Cophta*.

Goethe critiques the practice of reading ghost stories for the sole purpose of identifying cause-and-effect within the frame narrative of the *Unterhaltungen*, specifically in the interlude between the Antonelli and the Knocking Ghost stories. "Als der Erzähler einen Augenblick innehielt," we are told, "fing die Gesellschaft an ihre Gedanken und Zweifel über diese Geschichte zu äußern, ob sie wahr sei, ob sie auch wahr sein könne?" (*G* 9:1027). The characters' initial interpretive response to the story is to assess its validity. The old man telling the story gently chides the others for pursing this line of thought, pointing out that the story "müsse wahr sein, wenn sie interessant sein solle" (*G* 9:1027). He introduces an alternative approach to assessing the ghost story—rather than questioning whether it is true or false, he focuses on why it is "interesting" and what may be gleaned from it. His audience, however, is persistently preoccupied with the possibility of "Enlightening" the story; one of the characters

remarks that more information about the jilted lover and the conditions of his death might have produced something "zur *Aufklärung* der Geschichte" (*G* 9:1027, my emphasis). This attitude resembles that of the Proktophantasmist who angrily exclaimed about the spirits of the Walpurgisnacht, "wir haben ja aufgeklärt!" The older narrator recognizes the futility of this approach but slyly plays along, explaining that he had indeed questioned the woman who tended to the man in the last hours before his death. He reports that the man's last words were, "Sie vermeidet mich; aber auch nach meinem Tode soll sie keine Ruhe vor mir haben," which leads him to the following conclusion: "nur zu sehr mußten wir erfahren, daß man auch jenseits des Grabes Wort halten könne" (*G* 9:1027-1028). This "explanation" is hardly "Enlightening" in the traditional sense. The audience, seeking confirmation of the story's ontological truth or some plausible cause for the mysterious occurrences, receives an answer that is little more than a subtle punch line. Why and how did the ghost come back from the dead—because even beyond the grave, a man can still keep his word!

The audience's experience of the ghosts in the *Unterhaltungen* thus contrasts with its experience of the supernatural phenomena in both *Der Gross-Cophta* and *Claudine von Villa Bella*. In *Der Groß-Cophta*, the secrets of all apparently supernatural events are revealed before the audience witnesses them; the audience has no experience of suspense because Goethe makes little effort to cloak these events in mystery. The *Unterhaltungen* does not directly reveal any of its ghost stories' secrets. The text actively discourages its readers from seeking such basic explanations and concludes each story without resolving the mystery of the supernatural occurrence. This lack of resolution also differs from the immersive experience of the *Gespensterballade* in *Claudine von Villa Bella*. The people recounting ghost stories in the *Unterhaltungen* do not aim to create the same overpowering affective experience in their

audience—they tell these stories because they are "interesting," insisting that one should not need to find a cause-and-effect explanation for them in order to appreciate that. The *Unterhaltungen* asks the reader to take a considered interest in these ghosts while also placing them beyond the reach of an Enlightenment discourse. For that reason, it is significant that the ghosts in the *Unterhaltungen* never actually appear as visual apparitions; they manifest primarily as sounds. The *Aufklärung* discourse heavily privileges the visual sense—this is evident in phrases that we commonly use to describe the process of arriving at a more complete or reasonable understanding: "to see more clearly" or "to bring things to light." Given the proclivity in Enlightenment discourse to privilege visual information, it becomes difficult to understand how one could "enlighten" something that can be heard, but not seen.[250]

Similar to *Claudine von Villa Bella* and *Der Gross-Cophta*, the ghost stories in the *Unterhaltungen* actively engage with contemporary trends; *Claudine* critiqued the *Gespensterballade* tradition, *Der Gross-Cophta* took inspiration from the Cagliostro scandal, and the *Unterhaltungen* mimics the type of ghost stories that were frequently circulated among members of an educated social class at the end of the eighteenth century. They are the sorts of stories that might have appeared, for example, in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, or that friends might tell one another at social gatherings.[251] In both "Die Sängerin Antonelli" and the story of the Knocking Ghost, Goethe actually rewrites particular stories that were already circulating

[250] Kleist may have been thinking about something similar in "Das Bettelweib von Locarno," which similarly questions whether a ghost story can produce effective cognitive activity or knowledge. I will return to "Das Bettelweib" in my conclusion and show that, if it begins with a similar line of questioning and deploys some similar narrative techniques, it ultimately reaches a more pessimistic conclusion.

[251] We should remember that it would later become a mark of some distinction to be haunted by a ghost—in Theodor Fontane's *Effi Briest*, for example, having a ghost that haunts the family distinguishes one as a member of the aristocracy.

around Europe.[252] What Goethe presents as an Italian story in "Die Sängerin Antonelli" closely resembles the accounts of a French actress named Madame Clarion who reported being haunted by the voice of a jilted lover. The story of the Knocking Ghost was evidently a story that one of Goethe's friends in Weimar had told at a social gathering. Goethe's presentation of those stories critiques the prevalent "Enlightened" interpretive approach; examining the details of each story and its relationship to the frame narrative also reveals that the *Unterhaltungen* proposes an alternate aesthetic approach to the ghost narrative.

"Die Sängerin Antonelli" tells the story of a famous and beloved Italian singer: "in der Blüte ihrer Jahre, ihrer Figur, ihrer Talente fehlte ihr nichts" (*G* 9:1017). Graced with so many positive qualities, she attracts many admirers, the majority of whom she finds wanting. After many years, this leaves her in desperate need of a friend. She finds this friend—"ein junger Mann, auf den sie ihr Zutrauen warf, und der es in jedem Sinne zu verdienen schien" (*G* 9:1018)—in a young Genoese man, who initially agrees to promise that he will only ever be her friend and nothing more: "nur Freund zu sein, keine Ansprüche auf die Stelle eines Liebhabers zu machen" (*G* 9:1019). He proves unable to keep his word and falls in love with her, eventually attempting to persuade her that he alone is worthy of her love. When she refuses him and gradually attempts to see him less and less, his life takes a turn for the worse: "seine häuslichen Angelegenheiten fingen an äußerst schlimm zu werden" (*G* 9:1020). Eventually falling ill, he makes a final plea from his deathbed that she should visit him before he passes away. She

[252] In a letter dated 12/5/1794, Goethe wrote to Schiller asking him about whether he knew anything about the "*gespenstermäßigen Mystifikationsgeschichte*" that happened to Madame Clarion. Theodore Ziolkowski's article "Goethe's *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*: A Reappraisal" (*Monatshefte 50* [1958]) argued that Goethe did eventually acquire a written account of Clarion's haunting, which he reworked for his novel. A letter from Charlotte von Stein to Charlotte Schiller dated 2/19/1795 indicates that the story of the Knocking Ghost was one that he had Herr von Pannewitz tell several years before (cf. *G* 9:1514-1515).

ignores this plea three times and around midnight that evening, as a group of people are gathered in conversation with her around a table, "sich auf einmal eine klägliche, durchdringende, ängstliche und lange nachtönende Stimme hören ließ" (*G* 9:1022). The man has passed away; for days afterwards, that same voice is heard at the hour of his passing. Eventually, this particular disturbance seems to diminish, but she then begins to hear the same voice in other places. Later, the sound itself begins to change, turning into "ein Schuß, wie aus einer Flinte oder stark geladnen Pistole" (*G* 9:1025). After the shock of hearing this loud shot, the sound changes again, first into the sound of "ein lautes Händeklatschen" and later "in angenehmere Töne. Sie waren zwar nicht eigentlich melodisch, aber unglaublich angenehm und lieblich" (*G* 9:1026-1027). Despite a few startling moments spread throughout the narrative, the story ends peacefully, with the once disturbing and violent ghostly sounds resolving into a peaceful, pleasant melody.

Though many details of the story are lifted directly from Madam Clarion's accounts of being haunted, Goethe makes several significant alterations. In Goethe's version, the ghost story becomes a political allegory for the French revolution; his alterations simultaneously mask that allegory and make the details of the story align more closely with the political situation. Gero von Wilpert has noted that Goethe shortens the length of the haunting; this strengthens the story's function as an allegory by making its timeframe conform to that of the revolution. Clarion reported hearing supernatural noises for roughly two and a half years, but in the Antonelli story, that period is shortened to roughly a year and a half. This change in duration roughly aligns the length of the haunting with the period of extended unrest in France following the Revolution. The slow transformation of the sound—from ominous lamentation to bursts of violence to a slow resolution into "angenehmere Töne"—also parallels the transformations brought about by the

Revolution; what began as ominous, threatening rumblings became explosions of shocking violence and eventually resolved into some semblance of peace.

On the other hand, Goethe also makes efforts to disguise the allegory. The clearest effort to mask the political connection is Goethe's choice to set the story in Italy, rather than Madame Clarion's native France. A peculiar detail in the story, however, draws a connection back to France, even though the action has been set in a different country. When the shots sound, they always come "immer genau eine Stunde *vor* Mitternacht, da doch gewöhnlich in Neapel nach der italienischen Uhr gezählt wird und Mitternacht daselbst eigentlich keine Epoche macht" (*G* 9:1025). The "italienische Uhr" references a custom in Italy to number the hours of the day beginning at sunset, with bells chiming every hour from 1 through 12 (through the night and into the early morning); by this system, what might be traditionally thought of as "midnight" would maybe be 2 or 3 o'clock at night. This detail is a red herring; the true significance of this remark is that the sound occurs one hour *prior* to midnight. If midnight is the traditional hour for such supernatural occurrences, then perhaps this mysterious noise signals an event unfolding west of Naples, where "midnight" comes an hour earlier: perhaps those mysterious sounds actually emanate from Paris, the site of the revolution.[253]

The importance of this displaced political allegory comes into sharper focus when one considers the parallels between the Antonelli story and the conflict between characters in the frame narrative. In the political debate that precedes any of the storytelling, a character named

[253] Naples and Paris are now in the same time zone, so this argument does not work from a contemporary context, but this was not yet standardized in the eighteenth century, when locales might each measure their own time on the basis of the sunrise and sunset. It is not unreasonable, in this unregulated environment, to imagine that Goethe might have imagined that Paris would be somewhere in the vicinity of an hour ahead of Naples.

Karl reveals that he sympathizes with the Revolution, thereby outraging other members of the gathered company. The narrator introduces us to Karl as follows:

> Ungern hatte, wie man leicht denken kann, die ganze Gesellschaft ihre Wohnungen verlassen, aber Vetter Karl entfernte sich mit doppeltem Widerwillen von dem jenseitigen Rheinufer; nicht daß er etwa eine Geliebte daselbst zurückgelassen hätte, wie man nach seiner Jugend, seiner guten Gestalt und seiner leidenschaftlichen Natur hätte vermuten sollen; er hatte sich vielmehr *von der blendenden Schönheit verführen lassen, die unter dem Namen Freiheit sich erst heimlich, dann öffentlich so viele Anbeter zu verschaffen wußte*, und, so übel sie auch die einen behandelte, von den andern mit großer Lebhaftigkeit verehrt wurde. *Wie Liebende gewöhnlich von ihrer Leidenschaft verblendet werden, so erging es auch Vetter Karl.* (*G* 9:997, my emphasis)

This description of Karl foreshadows the dynamics of the Antonelli story. Antonelli, who also has "viele Anbeter," both in secret and in public, is identified strongly with freedom: she tells her Genoese friend "daß sie um keinen Preis der Welt ihre Freiheit weggebe" (*G* 9:1020). As the Genoese man falls in love with this symbol of freedom, so too does Karl fall in love with the "blendenden Schönheit" of freedom; as Antonelli's lover sees his life and affairs fall apart because of his desperate affection, so too does Karl's love for freedom and revolution threaten the stability of his life: "Stand, Glücksgüter, alle Verhältnisse scheinen in nichts zu verschwinden, indem das gewünschte Gut [his love, Freedom] zu einem, zu allem wird" (*G* 9:997). The narrator even uses a romantic analogy to describe Karl's relationship to the idea of freedom, as though anticipating the later parallels with the Antonelli narrative: "*wie* Liebende gewöhnlich von ihrer Leidenschaft verblendet werden, *so* erging es auch Vetter Karl."

This debate causes the hostess, known simply as the Baroness, to establish rules for interaction among the gathered company. This eventually leads them to turn to storytelling, as all explicit discussion of politics and the events of the day has been forbidden: the Baroness forbids "gänzlich alle Unterhaltung über das Interesse des Tages" (*G* 9:1009). In the name of basic courtesy ["im Namen der gemeinsten Höflichkeit"], she polices the boundaries of social

interaction; later, her focus will shift to policing aesthetics in a similar manner. Under such censorship, one can only approach the topic of the Revolution through displaced political allegory. The Antonelli story reads as an attempt to address Karl's inappropriate behavior and misguided political allegiance without breaking the Baroness's rules. Since any discussion of the normal, everyday world [das Interesse des Tages] is prohibited, the storyteller must express himself through a supernatural narrative—one literally outside the realm of everyday experience. In this sense, the Baroness's rules necessitate the intrusion of the supernatural; they prompt the telling of the ghost story by forbidding the discussion of non-fictitious events.

This reading establishes a chain of events in which each directly causes the next. The guests debate politics, so the Baroness establishes rules; the establishment of rules leads the guests to tell stories, and the first of those stories responds to Karl's behavior in the debate. Other details, however, disrupt the direct cause-and-effect links of this sequence and make it seem as though the Antonelli story is quite unrelated to the other events that have transpired. The reader learns that the narrator of the Antonelli story—a man referred to as "Der Geistliche"—was neither present for the debate nor the establishment of the Baroness's rules. He had gone out for a long walk: "der Geistliche hereintrat, der von einem langen Spaziergange zurückkam, und von dem, was in der Gesellschaft vorgekommen war, nichts erfahren hatte" (*G* 9:1010). Though the Baroness tells him what he has missed, this does not immediately prompt him to tell his story. He simply remarks that he has made a "Sammlung" of stories in his lifetime, "die vielleicht eben jetzt dieser Gesellschaft, wie sie gestimmt ist, manche angenehme Stunde verschaffen könnte" (*G* 9:1013). Seeming prescient of later developments in the *Unterhaltungen*, he alludes that the guests "werden mitunter alte Bekannte vielleicht nicht ungern in einer neuen Gestalt wieder antreffen" (*G* 9:1016). Suggesting that old acquaintances may take new forms within those

stories, he foreshadows the possibility of recognizing the Genoese lover in the Antonelli story as an allegory for Karl.

Despite these prescient remarks, the story also seems to exist apart from any direct causal chain; the events that initially seemed to prompt or justify the Antonelli narrative are put out of mind as the narrative begins. Karl has calmed down and expressed regret for his behavior. Though the Baroness has imposed these rules on social interaction, she has already gone to sleep, and her rules could be suspended in her absence. Furthermore, ther *Geistliche* narrates the story in the first person, as though he witnessed the events in it. Even if it were an allegorical composition generated in direct response to events of the frame narrative, the Antonelli story is presented as much older; it predates the events that seem to precipitate it. Earlier, Luise had playfully threatened to seek out "unsre Freunde und Nachbarn" in the *Geistliche*'s stories (*G* 9:1016). The *Geistliche* responded just as playfully:

> Sie werden mir aber auch dagegen erlauben in einem solchen Falle einen alten Folianten hervorzuziehen um zu beweisen, daß diese Geschichte schon vor einigen Jahrhunderten geschehen oder erfunden worden. (*G* 9:1016)

While Luise wants to understand the old man's stories as arising from the current circumstances—this is why she threatens to look for friends, or stand-ins for friends, in his narrative—the *Geistliche* dissociates his stories from the present by insisting that they are old, and that he could produce documents to prove it. Though no such documents are produced for the Antonelli story, the old man presents it as a first-hand historical anecdote, thus denying the possibility that Karl's behavior directly incited its telling.

One of the characters, named Fritz, remains aware of the possibility that "Die Sängerin Antonelli" has a deeper meaning. After the discussion of the Antonelli story concludes, Fritz remarks:

> Ich habe einen Verdacht, den ich aber nicht eher äußern will, als bis ich nochmals alle Umstände in mein Gedächtnis zurückgerufen und meine Kombinationen besser geprüft habe. (*G* 9:1028)

In his attempts to understand the story he has just heard, Fritz arrives at a remarkable conclusion: the key to understanding it, he suspects, lies not in the story itself, but in his memory of the story and his ability to establish meaningful connections between or "combinations" of its elements. Fritz's suspicion encourages the reader to undertake the same exercise, to search our memories and to build meaning by combining and categorizing the various elements we find there. Though the text has obfuscated the causal relationships that lead from the events of the frame narrative to the telling of the story, the reader may still identify connections while recollecting what he has read. The character of Antonelli, for instance, can be meaningfully connected with the concept of freedom; Karl can be connected with the Genoese man and the archetype of the lover blinded by his passion. Fritz's recognition of these combinations and his insight into "Die Sängerin Antonelli" remains only a suspicion; rather than attempt to express it directly, he tells a ghost story of his own that further supports the idea that meaning develops through the formation of such connections—between reality and fiction, politics and aesthetics, concept and character.

Fritz's story of the "Knocking Ghost" also contains a subtle underlying political allegory. Like the ghost of the Antonelli story, the Knocking Ghost manifests as an auditory phenomenon and the narrative provides no natural explanation for it. Fritz places his story in the same category as the old man's, recognizing that neither offers a clear explanation: it is a story "von der Art […], daß man sie niemals mit völliger Gewißheit habe erklären können" (*G* 9:1028). Unlike the Antonelli story, the story of the Knocking Ghost takes place locally, at "ein altes Schloß" belonging to Fritz's friend (*G* 9:1028). At this castle, Fritz's friend—"ein wackerer Edelmann"—takes in an orphan who becomes a serving girl to the women in the castle (*G*

9:1028). The young girl seems happy, but one day, for no apparent reason, one hears "wenn das Mädchen in dem Hause Geschäfte halber herumging, unter ihr, hier und da, pochen" (*G* 9:1028). The residents of the castle begin to detect a correlation between the girl's walking and this mysterious noise. "Anfangs scherzte man darüber," we are told, "endlich aber fing die Sache an unangenehm zu werden" (*G* 9:1028). Investigations into the cause of the sound begin, and Fritz's friend (*der Herr des Hauses*) tears up the floorboards immediately behind the girl as she walks but only finds "ein paar große Ratten" (*G* 9:1029). Eventually, he resorts to "einem strengen Mittel," threatening the girl with physical violence, at which point the mysterious sounds cease as suddenly as they began (*G* 9:1029).

After Fritz completes his story, the audience tries to explain it with proto-psychological interpretations. "Das schöne Kind [war] sein eignes Gespenst," remarks Luise, suggesting that the girl was playing a trick on her master and stopped at the threat of physical violence (*G* 9:1029). Some theorized that the sound came from a "Schutzgeist" intent on getting the girl out of the house, while others suggested that a "Liebhaber" had found a way to create the sounds in an effort to drive her out of the house and into his arms. These explanations link the ostensibly supernatural events to the girl's state of development, identifying her either as a child or an adolescent—some explanations place her either on the side of innocence (the playful trickster, the girl under the protection of a guardian spirit) while others align her with experience (driven out of the house into a rendezvous with a young lover). Fritz's final interpretive remark suggests an additional connection between the "supernatural" occurrence and the girl's aging and development:

> das gute Kind zehrte sich über diesen Vorfall beinahe völlig ab, and schien einem traurigen Geiste gleich, da sie vorher frisch, munter und die Heiterste im ganze Hause gewesen. Aber auch eine solche körperliche Abnahme läßt sich auf mehr als eine Weise deuten. (*G* 9:1029)

The experience of being haunted by this dreadful knocking wears on the poor girl, aging her and depleting her of youthful spirit.

Though these psychological interpretations differ from purely material explanations, they still exhibit a reliance on linear mental constructs; in these explanations, the supernatural phenomenon acquires meaning only through its association with the girl's sequential progression from innocence to experience. The aristocrats assign several possible meanings to the haunting sound of the knocks—the sounds could result from her childlike playfulness, or signify her hidden drive towards sexual awakening; in each of these interpretations, a phenomena that defies comprehension is given meaning when it is linked to the girl's psychological development across linear time. The *Geistliche* responds to this discussion, asserting that failure to properly assess these stories stems from an inability to break from progressive, sequential thinking; he suggests that we need to have "die Punkte und Momente alle gegenwärtig" (*G* 9:1030). The alternative mode of reflection that the *Geistliche* advocates echoes Fritz's earlier comments: Fritz had gained insight into the Antonelli story by culling details from his memory, considering them together, and drawing meaningful connections between them. This constitutes an effort to pull the events of a story out of sequence and make them all simultaneously present ("gegenwärtig") before one's consciousness. This connective and synthetic interpretive approach, requiring fluid movement backwards and forwards through recollections, transcends the trap of sequential thinking.

Following the conclusion of these ghost stories, a supernatural occurrence unexpectedly intrudes upon the frame narrative; this event and the aristocrats' responses to it further illustrate the text's alternative aesthetic and interpretive approach to the supernatural. As soon as the old man finishes speaking, "in der Ecke des Zimmers auf einmal ein sehr starker Knall sich hören

ließ" (*G* 9:1030). Since the gathered company had just been telling stories about supernatural sounds, Karl naturally makes a joke about it: "Es wird sich doch kein sterbender Liebhörer hören lassen?" (*G* 9:1030). Fritz investigates and discovers that the writing desk in the corner of the room has completely split in two. The company begins by seeking a natural cause for this event: "laßt uns […] nach dem Barometer sehen," Fritz says, thinking that a sudden change in atmospheric pressure could have made the desk split (*G* 9:1030). Examining the barometer produces no useful data, and Fritz laments that they do not have a "Hygrometer," because *that* instrument "wäre das nötigste" (*G* 9:1030). The Geistliche slyly retorts: "Es scheint […] das uns immer die nötigsten Instrumente abgehen, wenn wir Versuche auf Geister anstellen wollen" (*G* 9:1031). Though he does not elaborate, we can imagine that the old man refers to more than a scientific instrument; what we lack is the appropriate cognitive or imaginative "Instrumente" that would allow us to productively contemplate mysterious occurrences or read ghost stories effectively.

Further investigations finally produce a mysterious explanation—one that does not connect with any natural or material cause. On the horizon, Fritz sees the flames of a distant fire and asserts with confidence that a nearby estate, belonging to an aunt, has gone up in the blaze. That estate houses a writing desk made from the same tree as the one that has just split in two; "ich wollte wetten," says Fritz, "daß in diesem Augenblicke mit dem Lusthause unsrer Tante der zweite Schreibtisch verbrannt, und daß sein Zwillingsbruder auch davon leidet" (*G* 9:1031). The desk has split in two, Fritz reasons, because its twin brother in the other estate has gone up in flames. This presents the reader with a strange choice; the frame narrative has seemed analogous to the "real" world and is defined in contrast to supernatural stories—when the Baroness banned further discussion of real-world events, the aristocrats turned specifically to accounts of the

supernatural. Now, however, an unexplained event has occurred, and the best explanation offered is a supernatural one. The reader of the *Unterhaltungen* now finds him- or herself in the same position that the audience did in the frame narrative; we must choose how to approach this supernatural event. Either we will become preoccupied with finding a natural explanation for the desk's splitting, or we will try to practice what the old man and Fritz recommend—we will contemplate this section of text alongside the others we have read, and disregard sequence as we combine ideas and perceive connections between the component pieces of the whole.

As if to ensure that we do not default to the prevailing "Enlightened" interpretive mode, the text rearticulates the idea that a story's interest is not determined by its veracity according to standards of natural cause-and-effect. Following Fritz's explanation, we are told "eine einzelne Handlung oder Begebenheit ist interessant, nicht weil sie erklärbar oder wahrscheinlich, sodern weil sie wahr ist" (*G* 9:1032). This statement suggests that something does not need to be explicable or probable in order to be true or carry meaning—its interest and value lies in recognizing its truth despite an apparent lack of explanation. The story of the splitting desk and the story of the Knocking Ghost are true as extensions of the political allegory begun in the Antonelli story. The Revolution, allegorized as a distant phenomenon in the Antonelli story, has crept closer in the story of the Knocking Ghost. It has knocked beneath the floorboards, following the footsteps of a lower class girl in the castle of a friend. Only the threat of physical violence from the ruling class—"der Herr des Hauses"—quells the threat of Revolution. As in the Antonelli story, the Knocking Ghost's relationship to the Revolution is also eroticized; Fritz's assessment that a lover engineered the knocking so as to drive the girl out of the house paints the picture of a potentially erotic relationship between the lower class and the underground rumblings—a relationship that must be repressed. Yet the violence of the Revolution still finds a

way into the house, as evidenced by the instance of the splitting desk. Fritz's supernatural explanation for this event has political overtones as well. Both desks were made from the same wood, "auf *Einem Stamm* erzeugt worden" (*G* 9:1032 my emphasis). The word "Stamm" here refers to both the trunk of a tree (Baumstamm), and to a particular tribe, clan or class (Volksstamm)—in this case, the aristocracy. A threat to that class in one place is a threat to it everywhere. The Revolution in France may appear distant, but the European aristocracy should make no mistake: what happened in France could happen anywhere. When one desk burns, all desks made from the same trunk also suffer.

The splitting desk plays two roles in the text: it extends the political allegory, but also becomes a metaphor for the aesthetic approach to the supernatural proposed by the *Unterhaltungen*—an approach that builds meaning by recognizing connections between separate elements of a narrative without reducing those connections to causal explanations. This aesthetic model encourages readers to relinquish their search for causal links between these stories. It can be difficult to avoid a line of thinking that implicitly relies on cause-and-effect—we default to thinking "the desk splits *because* the other desk is burning." Fritz's explanation, however, only specifies that the two events occur simultaneously, connected but also separate. Each of the preceding stories has a similar relationship of both connection and disjunction to one another. The *Geistliche* tells his story as if in response to Karl's outburst, though he was not present to witness it; Fritz tells his story as if in answer to the *Geistliche*'s, though he admits to only a dim understanding of that story. The prevailing thread of the allegory also seems to have a kind of progression, moving from far (Antonelli) to near (the splitting desk), but this sequence leaves out Karl's outburst (also near) at the beginning. It is significant that Karl delivers the final aesthetic reminder: that a story is interesting only if it is true. The progression traced in this first part of the

Unterhaltungen, when the ghost stories are told, has circularity as it begins and ends with Karl. He starts the cycle with an inappropriate political attitude and ends it as the spokesman for a new approach to appreciating stories. Curiously, though the political allegory is targeted at Karl, what he evidently learns is, in fact, an aesthetic lesson; the two are related, but one does not seem to follow explicitly from the other. By breaking the causal links between the narratives, the *Unterhaltungen* presents several ghost stories that actively discourage the audience's experience of suspense. Although the phenomena exceed explanation, the *Unterhaltungen* discourages its audience from feeling as though they are caught in an "open sequence" that demands resolution. As the *Geistliche* warns, one cannot properly interpret ("*deuten*") these stories.[254] As the verb *deuten* signifies both interpretation and pointing at something—*jemand deutet auf etwas*—the type of interpretation referenced by the *Geistliche* connotes both precise and narrow. These stories cannot be interpretively reduced to a narrow causal chain. Instead, the stories of the *Unterhaltungen* connect like the twin desks in the two estates—their resonance with each other is not explained by proximity or material causality.

Recalling Todorov's distinctions between fantastic, uncanny and marvelous literature, we can now see that the *Unterhaltungen* restores value to the ghost story by presenting it as a form of marvelous literature and not as fantastic or uncanny. As these stories do not precipitate an experience of suspense, they cannot be considered fantastic literature, but their lack of resolution also fails to produce the affective response normally associated with an experience of the uncanny. The supernatural phenomena are instead considered as natural marvels. The characters in the frame narrative even suggest that one should not really consider these phenomena *super*natural at all:

[254] "Man soll keine meiner Geschichten deuten!" he declares (*G* 9:1016).

> Ja sie würden einig, dergleichen Phänomene [referring to the splitting of the desk, and things of the like] ebensogut für Naturphänomene gelten zu lassen, als andere welche sich öfter wiederholen, die wir mit Händen greifen und doch nicht erklären können. (*G* 9:1032)

Human beings have ever taken an interest in natural phenomena; Simon During argues that collecting natural marvels was an important practice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The *Unterhaltungen* suggests that the experience of supernatural phenomena could be treated in a similar manner. People collected marvels because they expanded conceptions of the world; they contributed to the growth of human knowledge by suggesting new possibilities. Ghost stories appear at the beginning of this text not because Goethe intends to further degrade the genre; in fact, the *Unterhaltungen* recuperates the ghost story as a cognitively productive form of literature. It does so by presenting supernatural narratives as marvels that can expand our sense of what is possible in the world.

Conclusion

In *Claudine von Villa Bella* and *Der Groß-Cophta*, Goethe critiqued ghost stories for their unproductive and potentially harmful tendency to discourage free cognitive activity in the audience. In *Claudine von Villa Bella,* Crugantino's suspenseful *Gespensterballade* produces a potent affective mood for the characters onstage, but discourages their more rigorous or refined cognitive engagement. *Der Groß-Cophta* also offers an indictment of suspense as antagonistic to autonomy and astute cognition; this critique is implied by the way the play's characters wield suspense as a manipulative tool, using it to control and deceive each other. Though suspense is still evoked internally within *Der Groß-Cophta,* the play denies its audience the type of suspense that might induce a search for causal explanations; the play's detailed exposition of causes preceding the presentation of their ostensibly supernatural effects intentionally prevents the

audience from engaging in that "Enlightening" procedure—which employs the "supernatural" as a didactic tool but does not recognize it as having additional aesthetic significance. Goethe's elimination of suspense in *Der Große-Cophta,* however, also risks the audience's affective and cognitive disengagement. In the *Unterhaltungen,* Goethe re-engages his readers through intriguing narrative, laced with recurrent themes, motifs and metaphors, though he again avoids the types of suspense that would manipulate his readers or trigger codified procedures for analyzing causality. These ghost stories are subsequently differentiated from fantastic or uncanny literature and aligned firmly with the category of the marvelous. At the start of this chapter, I cited Simon During's assertion that marvels were considered increasingly trivial by the second half of the 18th century. Goethe's *Unterhaltungen* quietly reinstates the value of the marvel within the realm of literature. Though it exceeds the scope of this chapter to consider the legacy of this aesthetic choice into the 19th century, that as-yet-unexamined thread of the German literary fabric warrants further exploration.

It is clear that the supernatural aesthetics proposed in the *Unterhaltungen* intend to avoid the problems of manipulation and to establish conditions under which the audience can recognize connections between the stories in an individualized and self-directed manner. The fact that knowledge and understanding emerge from such connections indicates a fundamental resonance between Goethe's aesthetic project in the *Unterhaltungen* and the values of the Enlightenment; in incorporating aesthetic experience into the Enlightenment process, however, Goethe's text shares more with Moritz's idiosyncratic understanding of *Geistersehen* than it does with the writings of Eberhard, Nicolai or Hennings. At the same time, a critic of the *Unterhaltungen* could observe an inherent contradiction in what it proposes. Though Goethe refrains from didactic use of suspense, the political allegories that connect the stories nevertheless serve to

educate or even discipline Karl and influence his revolutionary sympathies. Though readers are encouraged to depart from their conditioned responses, quell their desires to find reductive explanations and arrive at their own conclusions through a more aesthetic and personal cognitive process, a particular ideological stance can be observed within these stories and the lessons they offer. This text, like others discussed in earlier chapters, carries some of the paradox of the Enlightenment project—the effort to free others from misguided ideologies or catalyze autonomous cognitive activity is seldom if ever accomplished without the inevitable transmission of one's own epistemological or philosophical convictions.

EPILOGUE
WHAT GHOSTS CONCEAL: INTERPRETATIONS OF *HAMLET*

In contradistinction to the simple opposition between superstition and the Enlightenment, this dissertation argues that ghostly apparitions play a central role in the philosophy and aesthetics of the late Enlightenment in Germany. By causing the beholder to suspend his or her pre-existing understanding of the world, the encounter with a ghost reveals new possibilities and establishes conditions for progress towards the future. Johann August Eberhard's reinterpretation of the apparition of the *Weiße Frau* demonstrated the prowess of reason and its ability to provide sensible explanations for even the most remarkable phenomena, while Jean Paul's re-appropriation of the traits of the *Weiße Frau* allowed him to levy a satirical critique. By facing the specter of both spirit-seeing and metaphysics conjured through a consideration of Emanuel Swedenborg, Immanuel Kant arrived at a new understanding of the task of metaphysics. For Karl Philipp Moritz, spirit-seeing worked as an apt analogy for thinking about the task of aesthetic production and reception and how it can shape human psychology, and he illustrated this idea by having the narrator of his *Fragmente aus dem Tagebuch eines Geistersehers* wrestle with his response to the specter of a sage old shepherd. Friedrich Schiller observed a manipulative potential inherent in the type of thinking that Eberhard and others like him practiced, and he used he critiqued that mechanistic logic in *Der Geisterseher*, a work that features a number of ghostly apparitions. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe similarly used ghost and spirit-seeing narratives in

Claudine von Villa Bella and *Der Groß-Cophta* to critique the shortcomings of ghost stories before seeking aesthetic alternatives in the *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*.

In the title of my dissertation, I have called these various texts instances of the "Enlightening Supernatural" both because they fall generally within the period of the late Enlightenment and because they use ghosts and spirit-seeing as a means of revealing truths and new possibilities. The ghostly encounter temporarily suspends or challenges an existing worldview, but it also leads to greater clarity, innovative critiques, and/or expanded understanding. In Schiller's *Geisterseher*, the Prince cites a famous line from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that could serve as a leitmotif for the way in which supernatural encounters lead to an awareness of possibilities beyond what was initially imagined: "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

This line emphasizes the way in which a supernatural encounter challenges and suspends preexisting understandings of the world, demanding a resolution that will either restore of redefine them. The initial encounter with his father's ghost does not directly lead Hamlet to take action, but it disturbs him and makes him recognize the need for it. The fact that there are things in the world beyond philosophy's ken throws open the doors into the future; though Hamlet must now decide how to proceed, the encounter with the ghost precipitates an act of investigation, undertaken in the hopes of arriving at an expanded or heightened understanding of the truth. Hamlet cannot simply purge the ghost from his consciousness. In a similar fashion, ghost stories are not simply an old superstition to be left behind during the Enlightenment; the process of wrestling with them—with these "dreams" of an otherwise-reasonable society—created conditions of possibility for progress in thought and aesthetics.

When considering the history of ghost stories in the Western world, one can never get very far away from *Hamlet*, but beyond the eighteenth century, the emphasis in the interpretation shifts away from this potentially naïve assertion. At around the same time that ghosts become explicitly and self-consciously fictional, literary figures, they also begin to obfuscate and disguise the truth, rather than revealing it. As an epilogue to this project about the enlightening potential of the ghost story in the late eighteenth century, I will briefly consider two other iterations of *Hamlet* reception in German literature that focus instead on the ghost's capacities for deception and obfuscation. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and Kleist's famous ghost story, "Das Bettelweib von Locarno," both cite Shakespeare's play and place a different line at the center of their reception. As key texts in the tradition of the *Bildungsroman* and ghost story, respectively, these works also help to establish a basis on which the next one to two centuries of literary tradition are built. Although my readings are somewhat cursory, they gesture at future work on the enduring legacy of ghost stories beyond the Enlightenment. As ghosts take on a role that is more deceptive than revelatory, it is also worth considering how this emerges from and dialogues with the central role that they played in the Enlightenment project. Though fictional ghosts tend to conceal and deceive, how do they also continue to reveal truths, even if indirectly?

Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre

In my reading of the ghost stories in Goethe's *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*, I highlighted the ways in which those narratives discouraged suspense and encouraged the reader to make connections between apparently disparate elements. The *Geistlicher* explained this mode of engaging with narrative as an overcoming of temporality: one must try to think simultaneously about moments from distinct points in the narrative's unfolding.

When the writing desk splits because its twin is burning at another estate, this demonstrates the evident connection between two objects separated by a great physical distance and serves as an analogy for the *Geistlicher's* aesthetic idea. Just as distant objects can have an invisible link, so too can disparate narrative elements be linked with one another, though separated by a temporal gap in the narrative. The characters of the *Unterhaltungen*'s frame narrative accept the inexplicable splitting of the desk as "natural," embracing an expanded understanding of the marvelous things that are possible in the world, even if they are far greater than that which is dreamt of in non-fictional discourses such natural science and philosophy. Practicing the kind of aesthetic reception advocated by the *Geistlicher* is similarly intended to lead to a fuller understanding of the stories that the members of the company tell one another.

Published in the same year as the *Unterhaltungen*, Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* features both a "ghost" and a text-internal production of *Hamlet*, but it places emphasis on a different interpretation of *Hamlet*. As Wilhelm and his theater troupe mount their production, they have extended conversations about the play and its significance. During one of these conversations, Jarno remarks that he feels that all of *Hamlet* is built around the line, "the time is out of joint / O cursed sprite, that ever I was born to set it right" (see the end of Book 4, Kapitel 14; *FA* 9:608-609). Although this line refers mainly to the corrupted state of affairs both morally and politically in the state of Denmark, it superficially references a disrupted (dis*joint*ed) temporality. This line also features prominently in Derrida's reading of *Hamlet* as part of *Specters of Marx*; for him, it serves as an apt description of a ghost's existence. A ghost appears at the wrong moment and is therefore a being out of time. When Hamlet sees the ghost of his father, he sees time literally disjointed (the past appearing in the present) and from this is able to read that it is figuratively disjointed (e.g. that his uncle is unjustly on the throne).

This disjointed time is negative and problematic in *Hamlet*, but in the context of the *Unterhaltungen*, this line aptly describes a recommended approach to aesthetic reception. "Disjointed time" describes the type of reading that the *Geistlicher* advocates. He calls on his audience to pull together disparate elements and find connections between them, which is a way of telling them to disrupt the appearance of sequential unfolding so as to hold everything together in their minds simultaneously. Disrupting the linear sequence has a restorative function, as it reestablishes and reveals the true connections between disparate things. The appearance of supernatural occurrences represents an opportunity not to recognize inappropriate disruptions of the symbolic order, but rather to more fully and completely understand the world and all the marvelous things that are a part of it. Although this emphasis on a disrupted narrative temporality carries over from *Wilhelm Meister* to the *Unterhaltungen*, the negative connotations of that idea in the context of a *Hamlet* interpretation do not appear to be supported by the *Geistlicher's* aesthetic recommendations.

Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre appears at first to be governed by a very different aesthetics than the *Unterhaltungen*; as a *Bildungsroman*, the text is concerned with the sequential progress of Wilhelm's education and development, even if that progress is interrupted by periodic detours and distractions. The fact that emphasis is placed on the line by a character in the novel does not necessarily mean that this will have a bearing on the novel's aesthetic. Given the complementary relationship between this idea and the aesthetic recommendations of the *Unterhaltungen*, however, it is worth investigating the *Lehrjahre* to seek the presence or absence of textual connections outside the simple unfolding a narrative sequence. Particularly when thinking about the "ghost(s)" in this text, the aesthetic techniques employed by the *Unterhaltungen* and *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* appear far more similar than different. Wilhelm's seemingly linear

development is often built around recurrences and parallel events orchestrated for pedagogical purposes by a secret society, and the two significant appearances of "ghosts" in the text serve as a good example of this.

This secret society is the most spectral element of a book that contains no genuinely supernatural ghosts, but mysterious and ghostly figures do appear periodically, and at key moments in Wilhelm's journey towards socialized maturity in the *Turmgesellschaft*. For example, at the close of Book One, Wilhelm is passing Mariane's door late at night and thinking about calling on her when he sees something unexpected:

> [es] kam ihn vor, als wenn Marianens Türe sich öffnete und eine dunkle Gestalt sich herausbewegte. Er war zu weit, um deutlich zu sehen, und eh er sich faßte und recht aufsah, hatte sich die *Erscheinung* schon in der Nacht verloren. (my emphasis) (*FA* 9:426)

This mysterious "apparition" (*Erscheinung*) is not actually a ghost, though the narrator borrows language from a ghost story to describe the occurrence. The implication is rather that Mariane, to whom Wilhelm has been completely devoted, has another lover sneaking out of her room that night. The narrator continues to use language from ghost stories to describe the effect that it has on Wilhelm; it disturbs him, "wie ein Gespenst der Mitternacht, das ungeheure Schrecken erzeugt" (*FA* 9:427). When he discovers a letter that he assumes comes from that same lover, his suspicions are confirmed and his romance with Mariane abruptly ended, thus beginning Book Two of the *Lehrjahre* and the next stage of Wilhelm's journey.

A significant "ghost" figure appears at least one more time in Wilhelm's life, when he and his company are preparing their production of *Hamlet* in Book Five, and the appearance is again shrouded in mystery and connected with amorous intrigue. During the casting period, the company receives a cryptic notice that on the night of the performance, the Ghost of Hamlet's father will appear onstage, and they need not concern themselves with casting it. Placing faith in

this unexplained assurance, the players are surprised and delighted when a Ghost does indeed appear and carries off the part brilliantly. Following the production, the troupe still does not know the identity of person who played the Ghost; all that remains is the "Schleier"—the gauzy fabric that the Ghost used as part of the illusion that allowed it disappear from the stage. That night, however, the Ghost appears again in Wilhelm's bed chamber:

> [Wilhelm] richtete sich auf, das Gespenst anzureden, als er sich von zarten Armen umschlungen, seinen Mund mit lebaften Küssen verschlossen und eine Brust an der seinigen fühlte, die er wegzustossen nicht Mut hatte. (*FA* 9:696)

The text again plays with the language of ghost stories to describe a completely non-supernatural occurrence. Wilhelm here lacks the "courage" [*Mut*]—which should be read humorously in this context, as it is probably lust and not fear the overtakes him—to resist the advances of a mysterious and zealous lover. This is not actually a confrontation with a spirit from beyond the grave. In the morning, he finds his bed empty but for the *Schleier*, which is again left behind following the spirit's inexplicable disappearance. This time, there is a message sewn into the gauzy fabric: "Zum ersten- und letzenmal! Flieh! Jüngling, flieh!" (*FA* 9:697). Wilhelm's encounter with an apparition at the end of Book One prompted him to break off his relationship with Mariane and to flee; following this second encounter with a mysterious "ghost," Wilhelm is evidently called upon to flee once again.

We can already begin to see that these two incidents involving apparitions and spectral figures echo one another, drawing attention to the recurrences and repetitions that structure the superficial linearity of Wilhelm's development. One could make a more exhaustive list of the parallels, though this will not necessarily lead to a clearer understanding of them: in both incidents a spectral figure steals into a lover's chamber for a nighttime tryst; both incidents involve female lovers dressing in male clothing (Mariane dressed a soldier for her play; the

female love who comes to Wilhelm is dressed as the ghost of a king); both incidents involve sheer, white-ish cloth (the negligee that was gifted to Mariane; the *Schleier* disguising the Ghost's disappearance); and both incidents are intended to prompt Wilhelm to make a significant and abrupt change in his life. Shortly after the night he spends with the "Ghost" in Book Five, Philine teasingly reports that a friend of hers named Mariane has just come to town, and the echo of Book One grows louder. It seems that time truly has been thrown out of joint in the narrative—perhaps it was actually Mariane who slipped into his room the other night. Wilhelm never has the chance to follow up on this idea, however, because the next morning Philine has fled town, just as Wilhelm himself had fled at the end of Book One.

One can start to feel like the audience members of the *Unterhaltungen* here, listening to the *Geistlicher's* stories and forming a dim sense of the connections that exist between these disparate events; one has the feeling that, if one could simply hold both events in one's mind as though they were occurring simultaneously, the full significance of their connections would be revealed. In the case of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre,* however, I suspect that this feeling is misleading. These suggestive connections are left intentionally incomplete and imperfect. The time is out of joint—these two spectral encounters are echoes and repetitions of on another in some way—but like Hamlet, we and Wilhelm can only curse the fact that it is our task to try to make sense of it. Though we receive clear hints that Philine was the one who snuck into the room to sleep with Wilhelm, the actual significance of the message on the veil is not explained until Book Seven, when Wilhelm is finally with the *Turmgesellschaft*. Only then does he learn that the Ghost who appeared onstage was a member of that mysterious society. Their plan was to offer Wilhelm one great opportunity to act well, by beholding a truly mysterious ghost, in the hopes that he might thereby be "cured" of his love for the theater.

These ghostly encounters do not reveal truths, for their real explanation and purpose lies outside of anything revealed by the parallels that exist between them; these ghosts influence Wilhelm's life while disguising the source of that influence. The Ghost that appears onstage is but one piece of a plan orchestrated by a society given absolute authority and authorship over Wilhelm's life. This society is spectral, and it can disguise its authoritative influence while also exercising it. Its authority is also concealed without appearing to be concealed. The resonance between the ghostly encounters in Books One and Five of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* appears to reveal something. It would seem that, somehow, one could make sense of the palpable connections that exist between these events, but the true significance of the ghost and its message in Book Five are not actually revealed until Book Seven. The ghosts in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* steer Wilhelm along a path of someone else's design without disclosing the identity of that "someone else." This refinement of the manipulative potential in ghost stories that Schiller recognized and critiqued in *Der Geisterseher* becomes an enduring part of the *Bildungsroman* tradition; we find it in *Der Grüne Heinrich* and *Der Zauberberg*, not to mention the famous manipulations in *Effi Briest*.

Ghosts in these texts do not reveal truths, but rather obfuscate them, yet we should not overlook the indirectly revealing aspect of their appearance. Were these ghosts not to appear, we might not see any evidence of the spectral influence exercised by these authority figures on the lives of our heroes. If the *Turmgesellschaft* could accomplish its goals without the aid of such figures, it would certainly prefer it, given its tendency to prize secrecy above all. Even the most effectively spectral authority occasionally requires intervening agents, and so these ghosts persist as trace evidence of that hidden power. In this way, these figures intended to conceal truths become the one scrap of evidence pointing to something that would otherwise be completely

invisible. Interrogating the underlying source of these ghostly agents thus indirectly reveals a truth far greater than the one they attempt to hide.

Das Bettelweib von Locarno

Heinrich von Kleist's famous ghost story, "Das Bettelweib von Locarno" also features a ghost that does not fully reveal its truths; furthermore, it includes an allusion to *Hamlet*, emphasizing a different key line from the play and adding a new valence to the ghost story tradition. The simple plot of Kleist's short story are well-known: a beggar woman stops at the estate of a Marquis and Marquise, and the Marquise decides to allow the woman to enter and lie down on a pile of straw in a room of the estate. When the Marquis finds her there later, he orders the woman to get up and lie behind the stove instead. She rises, falls to the ground and injures herself, then gets up again and crosses the room before lying behind the stove and dying. Following her death, residents and guests of the estate begin to hear odd noises in the room—sounds that echo the motions of the beggar woman rising from the straw and crossing the room. The Marquis and Marquise investigate this together one night. When both they and their dog clearly hear those eerie sounds, the Marquis is driven mad and sets the estate on fire. He is killed in the blaze, and the townspeople lay his bones in a pile in the same corner where the beggar woman had first lain on the straw.

The mysterious sounds made by this ghost seem to reveal something, as it is possible to make a connection between them and the beggar woman who died in the castle, but they also fail to disclose the truth completely. The disembodied sounds suggest an incomplete picture of what actually happened to the beggar woman. Multiple people, including Marquis and Marquise, hear the sound of someone rising from the straw and crossing the room. On the day the beggar woman

died, however, there was an additional and important detail included in her journey to the spot behind the stove:

> Die Frau, da sie sich erhob, glitsche mit der Krücke auf dem glatten Boden aus und beschädigte sich auf einer gefährlichen Weise das Kreuz; dergestalt, daß sie zwar noch mit unsäglicher Mühe aufstand und quer, wie es ihr vorgeschrieben war, über das Zimmer ging, hinter dem Ofen aber unter Stöhnen und Ächzen niedersank und verschied. *(Sämtliche Werke und Briefe* 3:261)

The beggar woman's fall and resultant injury are not part of the sequence of ghostly sounds heard in that room many years later. The ghostly record of her presence in the castle discloses only a portion of her story, and it leaves out the most important detail. The Marquis witnesses her fall and could have taken note of the significant injury she suffered; this injury may even have precipitated her death as she lay behind the stove. The ghost of the beggar woman who haunts the room afterwards, however, also elides that important detail, which works against the expectation that a ghost is there to expose a prior misdeed. One might expect that the woman's ghost would return in order to reveal the sin of indifference that the Marquis committed, but this would require drawing attention to the woman's fall to the floor and revealing the truth about what occurred that day. Instead, the ghost does not disclose the Marquis's wrong-doing directly.

Although the connection between the beggar woman and the mysterious sounds in the room is clear to the reader, the Marquis seems unable to make the same connection. His confusion prompts the only line of spoken dialogue in the text; he cries out "Wer da?" on the night that he, his wife and their dog all hear the sounds in the room. He is evidently unwilling or unable to recognize that the ghostly sounds are connected with the woman who died that room years ago. This now-clichéd response to an encounter with a potentially supernatural event is also a citation of the first line of *Hamlet*—a night watchman on the wall of the castle calls out these words upon hearing something that he cannot make out through the fog. This citation—a

question and not a statement—draws attention to the way that ghosts conceal truths, rather than reveal them. The unknown sounds present a mystery that leads most immediately to frightened questions, and not to an expanded sense of all that is possible in the world.

In "Das Bettelweib von Locarno," the Marquis' query goes unanswered, as though the response to it had been elided, just as the sound of the beggar woman falling and injuring herself is not heard as part of the sequence of sounds that haunt the room. Those familiar with Shakespeare's play may know the line that follows, spoken by the character to whom the question is addressed: "Nein, *mir* antworten; steht und gebt Euch kund!" This response refuses to reveal anything and turns the demand for information back on the questioner. Mysterious sounds or sights no longer open the beholder up to expanded possibilities; instead, they demand that the beholder offer an account of himself. The unspoken call for this self-accounting in "Das Bettelweib" is linked to the unheard sound of the woman's fall because the moment she injured herself was the moment when the Marquis did something wrong. By not offering her aid and ignoring her injury, he may have indirectly caused her death. His self-accounting would have to include this sin of omission. The unspoken response of the old woman's ghost would likely call upon him to reflect on that omission and discover the aspect of the story that has been repressed.

The pattern of concealing important information extends to the very end of "Das Bettelweib von Locarno." The story's tragic but ambiguous conclusion never reveals to the reader whether the Marquis has recognized his sin against the beggar-woman. His decision to immolate himself in the castle could result either from the madness of guilt at having realized his wrong-doing or from the madness of uncertainty, as he is unable to understand the meaning and presence of the mysterious sounds. We witness only the results of his response to this encounter

with the spirit and are left to assess his reason for taking that action on our own. The realities of his inner life or psychic state remain hidden.

By connecting hidden but persistent guilt with an opaque human psyche, Kleist effectively anticipates the theory of repression in modern psychoanalysis and links it with the experience of being haunted. Through its partial representation of the beggar woman's death, the ghost depicts a very truthful version of how her presence in the castle was received. The Marquis ignored her injury in the moment that it occurred and then tacitly denied his potential culpability in her death, both to himself and to others. By omitting the sound of her fall from the sequence of haunting sounds, the incomplete record of the woman's presence in that room documents the repression of this guilt. It represents and repeats that fateful occurrence in exactly the same way that the Marquis originally perceived it—the way that it must have appeared to him in his psyche—and in so doing questions and indicts him for ignoring the crucial fact of the woman's injury.

This also means that the partial revelations and apparent obfuscations of the beggar woman's ghost still work to effectively expose a hidden truth; like the deceptive ghosts in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, this ghost also reveals something while seeming to conceal it. In this case, it makes the invisible workings of the human psyche visible. The beggar woman's ghost does not appear before the Marquis and his wife to speak explicitly about what he has done wrong. Instead, it patterns its haunting after the partial perceptions and repressions of the Marquis's psyche and exposes its cruel oversight. Without a way to make this internal, invisible psychic process visible, it might be easier to overlook, both for the Marquis and for the reader. Even when they do not speak the whole truth directly, textual ghosts can appear as visible traces of otherwise invisible psychic processes.

By using the ghost of the beggar woman so effectively as a visible condensation of the Marquis's repressed guilt, Kleist's short story represents both the beginning of the modern ghost story and its apotheosis. In his novel *Ghost Story* from 1979, horror novelist Peter Straub writes that "the unhappy perception at the center of every ghost story" is the frightening assertion is that "you are a ghost." You, the haunted, are the ghost that haunts you. This statement certainly rings true for "Das Bettelweib von Locarno," for what else is the ghost of the beggar woman but a figuration of the Marquis's psyche? Many ghost stories after the Enlightenment can indeed be examined with this assertion in mind. Though the heroes of such stories often call out that question, "Who are you?" into the darkness, they are most frequently greeted not with a clear answer, but with the implicit demand to offer an account of themselves, for the ghosts that haunt them are spectral traces of otherwise invisible, and perhaps repressed or unattractive, parts of themselves.

What Ghosts (Still) Reveal

Moving out of the Enlightenment and into literary traditions such as the *Bildungsroman* and the ghost stories of the nineteenth and twentieth century, ghostly apparitions continue to appear regularly as textual figures, but are not as clearly associated with the act of revealing truths and offering a sense of expanded possibility. We should not, however, lose sight of the ways in which those spirits—not associated with deception and concealment—allow us to see things that might otherwise be invisible. As the spectral agents of decentralized or concealed authority in the *Bildungsroman* tradition, ghosts provide evidence of external influence on the unfolding and development of a character like Wilhelm Meister. As figurations of hidden guilt and repression, ghosts can also provide clues as to the workings of otherwise invisible processes

of the human psyche. Though indirect, these acts of revelation must still count as ways in which the appearance of ghosts in texts can expand one's sense of what exists and what is possible in the world.

In my introduction, I suggested that in the eighteenth century, the belief in ghosts had itself become a ghost: such superstitious beliefs seemed anachronistic within an Enlightenment context, yet they lingered well beyond the point when they should have passed out of the world. It seems that ghosts consistently find ways of doing this—of "ghosting" themselves into the next phase of their presence in human experience, persisting despite clear reasons why they should not. At the end of the eighteenth century, when textual ghosts became clearly and self-consciously fictional, this might have been an appropriate moment for their revelatory function—their ability to expand the bounds of philosophy and thought—to pass away. Superficially, this may even have occurred, but this epilogue suggests that the deceptive and mysterious ghosts of fiction still have much to reveal about the invisible workings of power and the human psyche. The "enlightening supernatural" may indeed have died, but if so, then we are still living with its ghost.

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